

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS[®]

THE PLANE ABOVE: Secrets of the Astral Sea[™]



ROLEPLAYING GAME SUPPLEMENT

Rob Heinsoo

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ASTRAL ADVENTURING

EXPERIENCED PLAYERS and Dungeon Masters might be familiar with previous descriptions of the Astral Sea as an infinite silvery plane. In the world of the 4th Edition D&D® game, the Plane Above is that and more—it also serves as the place where many of the deities of the D&D multiverse reside.

This new view of the Astral Sea includes other aspects that haven't been part of the cosmology before, such as the border islands that surround the divine dominions. Suffice it to say that the amount of interesting territory and beings that characters might interact with in the Plane Above has been expanded. Those border islands are covered in full later in this book along with the dominions themselves.

Chapter 1, however, is designed to help you get the most out of this book for your campaign. The chapter presents seven campaign themes that weave together the rest of the elements of this book. These themes range from the predictable (Fight the Gods of Evil) to the unexpected (Overcome Heaven's Flaws) to the world-shaking (Adventure into Myth).

"Traveling the Astral Sea" at the end of Chapter 1 revisits the earlier discussion of geography, providing mechanics for navigation, vessels, and astral hazards.

The following sections of this chapter create a framework for adventures on the Astral Sea.

- ♦ **The Astral Sea:** The Plane Above has many facets to its nature and its history, any of which can come into play. This summary highlights each of those facets.
- ♦ **Geography:** Essential physical concepts that play into all the areas the Astral Sea encompasses.
- ♦ **Campaign Themes:** Seven diverse approaches to running a campaign that uses the Plane Above. Most of the themes are complementary rather than exclusive, meaning that you can incorporate elements from more than one to create a unique campaign experience.
- ♦ **Traveling the Astral Sea:** How to move around in the Astral Sea, and a look at some of the hazards that visitors and natives alike can encounter as they traverse the Plane Above.



THE ASTRAL SEA

Welcome to the world above the world of mortals, an infinite silver expanse dotted by countless small shards of land, scattered larger islands, and the dominions of the gods. Here are some key highlights to keep in mind as you prepare to use the Plane Above in your campaign.

The Astral Sea is a former battlefield still ravaged by the cosmic conflict known as the Dawn War.

The deities were the original inhabitants of the astral realm when the world was newly created by the primordials and the mortal races had yet to find their final forms. Along with shaping and refining the creation of the world, the gods had grand plans for a single realm that would link all their dominions together with an all-powerful astral connection known as the Lattice of Heaven.

When the gods intervened to prevent the primordials from destroying the world and starting a new creation, the primordials responded by invading the Plane Above. Gods died, dominions crumbled, and the incomplete Lattice of Heaven was shattered into fragments. The astral world that had nearly become a fantastic interlocked mesh of divine dominions blew apart into an infinite silver sea. Much later, when the gods had eked out a narrow victory in the Dawn War, only a few of the divine dominions that survived the devastation still functioned for their deities, hinting at the glory that died forever when the primordials destroyed the Lattice.

Since that time, shattered dominions (those that no longer have a deity), ruins, corpses of forgotten gods and primordials, and war magic left over from the Dawn War still linger within the Astral Sea, whether on shards of matter scattered throughout the astral realm or floating freely through it. Dramatic examples of such remnants include the Golden Monolith of Erishani (page 108), the floating corpse of the primordial Haemnathuun (*Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*, page 120), and the primordial energy bubble known as Frostburn (page 125).

The player characters will most likely have already met the free-willed servitors that have a preference for killing known as abominations—one of the worst consequences of the great rituals employed during the Dawn War. In the prison realm of Carceri (page 104), or perhaps on the Glorious Hunt in the dominion of Arvandor (page 37), the characters might uncover the full story of the abominations' origin and the reasons for their increasing attacks centuries after the end of the war they were created to win.

Gods such as Asmodeus took advantage of the Dawn War to seize power they didn't deserve (see the Nine Hells on page 65). Threats native to the Far

Realm took advantage of the devastation wrought by the Dawn War to pry a hole into reality through which they could enter. And as always, many horrible echoes of the Dawn War are poised to enter the Astral Sea unless capable paragon and epic tier characters can set things right and create something better in the scars left over by the war.

The Astral Sea is the home of the gods.

Most of the deities who survived the Dawn War maintain mighty dominions on islands scattered widely through the Astral Sea. Chapter 2 details each of the functioning divine dominions, as well as the border islands that cluster around each dominion. (The shattered dominions are discussed in Chapter 3.)

Although the deities wield much influence in the mortal world and its echo planes, the Feywild and the Shadowfell, the gods' influence has been limited due to the ravages of the Dawn War and the forceful intervention of the primal spirits. But in the Plane Above, the deities are the most powerful agents, taking direct actions and choosing paths that shape the history of the plane.

Momentous divine events that have acquired mythic force did not end after the Dawn War. Epoch-shaping events since that conflict have included Asmodeus's rise to power and manipulation of the gods (page 65), Gruumsh's invasion of Bane's dominion of Chernoggar (page 51), the destruction of the god Amoth and his dominion of Kalandurren by three demon princes (page 114), and Erathis's more recent determination to restore the dominions of the gods and rebuild the Lattice of Heaven (page 61).

Depending on the scope and interests of your campaign, the player characters might be able to reshape the Plane Above, including the agendas and life spans of the deities that reside there. The campaign themes beginning on page 9 explore these possibilities in more detail.

The Astral Sea is the setting for many separate afterlives for mortal worshipers of the gods.

Each of the functioning divine dominions has its population constantly refreshed by a small number of exalted, the spirits of dead mortals restored to life in new physical bodies known as soulforms. The exalted are generally not the protagonists of the great stories of the Plane Above, since they generally maintain their immortality only while they stay within their god's dominion. But many exalted do venture beyond the protection of their dominion on pilgrimages, sightseeing voyages, or missions for their deity that could bring them into conflict or association with the player characters.

The exalted most frequently encountered in the wider Astral Sea are exalted of Bane (on missions of conquest), Gruumsh (on missions of destruction), Erathis (pursuing aspects of the Game of Making, page 62), and Kord (raising hell or training for the Dusk War, page 45).

Chapter 2 details the exalted and their less fortunate counterparts, the soulform beings collectively known as outsiders. After the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven, the divine dominions stopped functioning at full power and effectiveness. Many mortals who were traveling to their god's dominion to become exalted suffered the repercussions of that event, instead waking up on the shores of the border islands surrounding each of the dominions. They are cursed with the name "outsiders" because they are physically unable to enter the dominion of their god.

The outsiders live as well as they can in the outer islands, sometimes managing a prosperous if not perfect afterlife (as in the Green Isles around Arvandor, page 42, and in the Daybreak Islands around Hestavar, page 64). In other cases, such as in the island chain around Tytherion known as the Scales (page 88), outsiders live only by avoiding the hunting parties led by the servants of the evil deities they might once have worshiped.

Even in the best circumstances, the outsiders and mortals living on the border islands are cut off from the full protection of the dominions. Player characters will often be the only defenders standing between the inhabitants of the border islands and the ravagers of the Astral Sea: abominations, aberrants, slavers from the Nine Hells, githyanki pirates, quom searchers, and servants of the evil gods. In turn, the border islands and their outsider populations provide points of light outside the divine dominions where characters can recuperate and prepare for their next adventure.

The Astral Sea is the home of many native mortal races whose goals will shape the characters' adventures.

The four major independent races of the Astral Sea are covered in detail at the start of Chapter 3. Each of the four races has its own slant on the Plane Above that is likely to conflict with the player characters' goals.

The couatls seem like the most benevolent of the four, but their crusade against various forms of evil masks a status-oriented society that can turn player characters into pawns used in the hierarchy contests within the couatls' Cloud Court (page 93).

Of the four races, the githyanki have the most influence on events in the Astral Sea. Player characters will probably have encountered githyanki in their earlier adventures. The githyanki excel as quick-sailing raiders and pirates, preying mostly on the border islands, on those who sail between the islands, and on explorers who dare the deep Astral Sea. In

a campaign featuring confrontations with astral pirates (page 12), the githyanki and their wandering city Tu'narath can become the characters' chief adversaries.

The maruts were originally creations of the deities. But they were created to have an impartial perspective to allow them to make detached rulings that would cut down on the squabbling gods' tendency to resolve arguments by force. Unless the characters have supreme diplomatic skills and some knowledge of history, it's likely that the maruts' literally interpreted contracts will force them into awkward and violent situations rather than making their lives easier.

The quom are the most straightforward of the four races. A once-peaceful race converted to violence by the accidental death of their god in a Dawn War battle between Bahamut and a powerful primordial, the quom cut the fragments of their dead god out of the bodies of anyone who had the bad luck to contain a piece of it, no matter how small. The quom rival the githyanki as fearsome raiders, but where the githyanki seek plunder and entertaining violence, the quom target random creatures, structures, and magic items. As part of a campaign, the quom's random raids can target the player characters, or those close to them. Occasionally, the quom might even target the characters' enemies, perhaps forcing the characters to choose between enemies to assist.

The Astral Sea is most suited to paragon tier and epic tier adventures.

Most of the monsters and threats found in the Astral Sea match up well against paragon and epic tier adventurers. Exceptions exist, but few heroic tier characters should count on being able to sail through the Astral Sea without falling prey to githyanki pirates or devils harvesting souls for the Nine Hells. Heroic tier characters can use portals to access specific astral locations, but most adventures in the Astral Sea are better suited for adventurers in the paragon or epic tier.

OTHER SOURCES

Certain aspects of the Astral Sea have been detailed in earlier D&D® supplements and in some *Dragon*® magazine articles on *D&D Insider*™. Here's a list of significant sources.

Manual of the Planes™, especially Chapter 5: The Astral Sea.

"Playing Githzerai" in *Dragon* #378.

"Tu'narath, City of Death" in *Dragon* #377.

"Codex of Betrayal: Alloces, the Butcher of Nessus" in *Dragon* #373.

"Deities and Demigods: Bane" in *Dragon* #372.

"Masters of the Planes" in *Dragon* #372.

"Hestavar" in *Dragon* #371.

The “silver sea” left in the wake of the destruction of the original Lattice of Heaven isn’t actually a sea, but rather a fantastic version of the space beyond the world, filled with vast clouds of a luminous silver-gray substance that is not fully a mist and not fully a liquid. Thousands of stars glitter in the distance, as well as the colored veils of the astral dominions, if a traveler is close enough to see them. Vast expanses of “open sea” between the drifting clouds of astral mist provide travelers with hundreds of miles of visibility. Inside even the densest astral mist, a traveler can see objects several miles away with ease, since the wispy clouds of the Astral Sea don’t impede vision as much as clouds do in the world.

The Astral Sea is not wet or cold; a cool tingle on the skin is the only sensation a traveler gets. Creatures that breathe do so without trouble. Flying creatures can fly through the astral stuff as if it were air, and natural swimmers can swim through it as if it were water. Other creatures can move slowly through the Astral Sea by sheer willpower (they have a fly speed of 2 [clumsy] and can hover). More information on flying and sailing through the Astral Sea is located in “Traveling the Astral Sea” on page 19.

THE ASTRAL HORIZON

Even though the Astral Sea is a three-dimensional void, it has a distinct horizon that forms something like the surface of an ocean. The mists below this surface are darker and denser, while the mists above the surface are brighter and more open. Most creatures and vessels slowly orient themselves toward this subtle demarcation, often without realizing it, in order to travel along the “surface” of the Astral Sea. Vessels in the Astral Sea tend to meet along this nominal surface, creating encounters that begin in a space that seems two-dimensional, though it can become three-dimensional as soon as vessels begin maneuvering for position.

The functioning divine dominions all rest along this surface horizon. A vessel approaching an astral dominion normally does so from the dominion’s equivalent of sea level, or from its equator for those dominions that are shaped like globes. It’s unusual, though obviously not impossible, to drop in on a dominion from a pole or the zenith of its sky.

ISLANDS IN THE GREAT SEA

Though the Astral Sea is profoundly empty, it is so unthinkable vast that it has room for divine dominions, shattered dominions, countless island motes, tumbling wrecks of Dawn War battlefields, and citadel islands. No one, except perhaps a few githyanki far

wanderers or the quom, has a clear idea of everything that could be found in the deep Astral Sea—the part of the plane that surrounds the comparatively small area in which most of the gods’ dominions are located.

So far as anyone knows, the only truly fixed locations in the Astral Sea are occupied by the few functioning divine dominions that still maintain some sort of connection with the skeleton of the original divine Lattice, such as Celestia, Tytherion, and the Nine Hells. The border islands that spring up around each of the functioning divine dominions don’t stay in fixed positions, but each does tend to remain within the orbit of its source dominion. The rest of the islands, motes, and shattered dominions of the Astral Sea often change position slightly or drastically every year as a consequence of changes in the astral tide.

Astral navigators start with knowledge of the basic directions from one functioning divine dominion to the next. But even with that knowledge, the amount of time it actually takes to sail or fly through the entire Astral Sea from one known dominion to another varies hugely depending on flows of astral energy that are largely imperceptible. More details on astral travel appear on page 19.

THE DOMINIONS’ COLOR VEILS

Great walls of shimmering light known as color veils surround each of the functioning divine dominions (as well as the dominions that have lost their deities). Each dominion has its own color (see *Manual of the Planes*, page 16). Most color veils are semiopaque, offering partial or shifting glimpses of the dominion within.

Travel along the horizon of the Astral Sea is often sped up considerably by color strands, which are wide ribbons of light related to the color veil of their dominion. Whereas crossing an actual color veil immediately places a traveler inside the dominion, entering a color strand transports a traveler to a position on the edge of the corresponding dominion. If the dominion has border islands, travelers entering a color strand are transported to the edge of that archipelago, allowing entrance to the dominion only by sailing through the border islands.

A traveler using a color strand to reach a shattered dominion that no longer has border islands is transported to a place some miles from the dominion’s edge, leaving enough time for preparations before reaching the ruined land. Details on each of the dominions’ color veils and the rules for travel by way of color strands appear in the “Navigating the Astral Sea” section on page 25.

No book can provide the compelling stories that you and the player characters weave together to bring your game world to life. The goal of this book is to provide a compelling backdrop and a rich selection of elements for you to draw upon for your campaign. The seven campaign themes introduced below help you benefit from this book. Several of the themes include suggested campaign arcs to use as inspiration.

The themes discussed in this section are:

- ◆ **Explore the Infinite Sea:** An infinite ocean opens the option of framing much of a campaign's points of interest as moments in the career of the greatest explorers of the cosmos. This theme examines the manner in which rephrasing character rewards can turn some exploration into the characters' main goal instead of a step along the way.
- ◆ **Crawl Astral Dungeons:** Groups that prefer old-school dungeon crawl adventures can find what they're looking for, one island at a time.
- ◆ **Fight Astral Pirates:** Githyanki, quom, and slavers working for the evil gods make great enemies, particularly when the characters get to feel like pirates. The Astral Incursion campaign arc suggests one way of using the githyanki as focal villains for much of the paragon tier.
- ◆ **Fight the Gods of Evil:** No enemies exist that are more powerful than the evil gods. Make use of the information on the dark dominions in Chapter 2 to infiltrate, assault, and perhaps ultimately destroy the realms of the evil gods. The Gods War campaign arc is a campaign that spans thirty levels, gradually revealing the nature of this theme.
- ◆ **Join Heaven's Order:** Epic tier characters already dabble with demigod status and positions as exarchs. This theme draws the characters into closer connection with the gods of one or more dominions, or points the way to joining the gods on the characters' own terms.
- ◆ **Overcome Heaven's Flaws:** The divine system hasn't worked properly since the Lattice of Heaven was destroyed. The characters attempt to solve the tragedy of the outsiders, with or without the assistance of the deities.
- ◆ **Adventure into Myth:** This theme offers as possible adventures the conflicts of history and myth related in this book (and in all other supplements). Venturing into deep myth makes it possible for the characters to succeed and change the world for the better or fail horribly and return to a world in worse shape than it was before. It's a delicate balance, but an exciting option for demonstrating how epic tier characters assume the mantle of cosmic power.

EXPLORE THE INFINITE SEA

Part of the appeal of the separate planes of existence is that they offer you a change of pace, allowing an all-new style of adventure with an elaborate context that you can draw in as you choose.

Fundamentally, the Astral Sea establishes an otherworldly analog of seafaring adventures involving relatively rapid but perilous travel between a succession of familiar and unexplored islands. Of course, from the perspective of characters newly arrived to the Astral Sea, even the friendliest of the divine dominions count as unknown territory, to say nothing of the border islands, shattered dominions, and motes of the deeper Astral Sea. Most campaigns that make use of multiple locations within the Astral Sea can easily contain a strong element of exploration.

The assumptions of the "points of light" setting for the 4th Edition world translate well to adventures in the Astral Sea. The gods' dominions are the only truly stable points in an otherwise ever-shifting environment, and the sole fixed locations that can be confidently placed upon an astral map. Depending on the way you treat the island archipelagoes outside the dominions, a few of the border islands might contain settlements that qualify as points of light where the characters can seek refuge. Of course, raiders from one of the evil dominions or the deep Astral Sea can erase such havens at any time. Depending on their relations with the gods, the characters might need to explore large portions of the Astral Sea just to find locations they can use as safe havens.

THE EXPLORERS' REWARDS

In a sense, the Astral Sea is the scene of a perpetual age of exploration. Unlike our own world, which offers merely two poles for explorers' flags and a finite number of mightiest rivers and tallest mountains, the Astral Sea perpetually renews itself with undiscovered islands and shards of ancient Dawn War battlefields newly swirled into reach by the astral tides.

To motivate the characters to explore wide reaches of the Astral Sea, draw a clear connection between exploration and loot. Fragments of ancient battlefields that have escaped or defied plunder since the Dawn War should be rich sources of magic items. Some come from the original armies of the gods. Others come from the forces of the primordials. Given the scope of the conflict and its numerous bizarre alliances, any item you want to introduce into your campaign, or that your players have asked for on their wish lists (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 125), could reasonably be found somewhere on an ancient



battlefield, or within barrows dug beside the field and then forgotten.

To strengthen the association between exploration and loot, you could occasionally give the player characters “something for almost nothing.” When characters have already braved astral hazards to voyage to distant reaches of the Astral Sea, following quests you set up earlier or searching widely on their own, provide them with the equivalent of a miner’s lucky strike: an ancient Dawn War site, for example, that turns out to be unguarded and unplundered. After a couple of skill challenge searches and several tense moments when the characters expect to be attacked, reward them for their explorations with treasure they didn’t have to fight for. Of course, navigational hazards and encounters with astral pirates or monsters on the way home can balance the adventure as you like. If you begin associating the best treasure parcels with far-ranging exploration rather than always associating treasure with monsters that fight to defend it, the characters will soon understand that in the Plane Above, they are racing to discover untapped sites before the githyanki, the quom, or other rivals can plunder them.

Rival explorers and plunderers also could become ongoing villains in your campaign. After an inconclusive encounter with a githyanki or quom ship, have one of the treasures the characters find in a subsequent adventure be part of a magic item set, as introduced in *Adventurer’s Vault 2*. Use a subsequent

quest to point to the location of another piece of the set. Then put the characters’ nemesis ahead of them on the exploration path and find out how far the characters are willing to go to outrace or outfight their rivals.

Alternatively, you could shape a decisive phase of your paragon or epic tier campaign by effectively turning the exploration-savvy characters into the chief enemies, or chief benefactors, of one of the Astral Sea’s principal power groups. Characters exploring the Astral Sea might find artifacts or items that are worth far more to the githyanki or the quom than to them. For example, characters who have had previous dealings with the quom could undertake a great mission of exploration that is certain to lead to an unsurpassed Dawn War treasure. What happens when that Dawn War battlefield turns out to be a great remnant of the god Lakal, the object of the quom’s eternal quest? What if the characters find a source of Lakal’s essence so large that it might enable the quom to succeed in their absurd quest?

Epic tier campaigns often center on plot lines that reshape the world. If you like, items and locations discovered on voyages of exploration, including earlier voyages, can turn out to be pivotal as the characters play out their epic destinies.

EXPLORATION RESOURCES

Several sections of this book relate directly to campaigns in which the characters cruise through the

Astral Sea in search of adventure, glory, and loot. “Traveling the Astral Sea,” beginning on page 19 of this chapter, details the types of astral vessels that the characters are most likely to obtain and provides hazards, skill challenges, and mechanics for determining the success or failure of the characters’ navigational techniques. A campaign heavily based on exploration should make use of the hazards sparingly and when most dramatically effective, rather than complicating every voyage the characters undertake.

The section on astral travel in this chapter also offers images and statistics for the coveted dominion ships—astral vessels that extend the dominions’ magical power. Player characters who enter a god’s service, or otherwise become valuable allies of the deities (see “Join Heaven’s Order,” page 16), could receive the use of a dominion ship as a benefit of their service. Alternatively, if the characters’ astral vehicle becomes extremely important to them, you can encourage them to expend resources to upgrade it, letting them fashion an astral vessel that rivals or exceeds the dominion ships in appearance and performance.

The dominions, border islands, shattered dominions, and shards presented throughout Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 can form the core of an exploration-themed campaign’s settings. “Motes in the Astral Sea” (page 124) presents a medley of ancient battlefields, wandering comets, and bizarre cultures drifting on shards lost within the deep Astral Sea, but it is not a definitive list. The point of the section is to suggest that all varieties of cultures and adventures can be found somewhere in the infinite sea. As long as you maintain the tone that suits your game, the far reaches of the astral realm give you license to create new challenges and settings for epic tier characters who can rightly say that they have already dealt with every monster under the sun.

CRAWL ASTRAL DUNGEONS

Some groups of players stick to their roots—they started as dungeon-crawling adventurers in the heroic tier, and neither the powers of the paragon tier nor the cosmic responsibilities of the epic tier can budge them from their dungeon-crawling preferences. But framing a dungeon crawl-style game at paragon and epic tier can be difficult.

As discussed in the exploration theme, the Astral Sea offers an endless array of exotic and varied settings. For a dungeon crawl-style game, what’s required is the sense that each session, or adventure, can be played out with little reference to the monsters or encounters from the previous adventure’s location. Dedicated dungeon crawlers aren’t that interested in the details of their travel between adventures; they just want to know that they rested, restocked, and can arrive at their next destination.

The Astral Sea naturally provides both ingredients necessary for an engaging high-level dungeon crawl game: variation and isolation. Combine infinitely varied shard-islands in the Astral Sea with the fact that each of the islands can be located as far from any other island as you like, and you have a recipe for a dungeon crawl-style game presented as an island-hopping campaign.

With the understanding that a dungeon crawl-style game provides most of what dungeon enthusiasts want out of their episodic games, all the adventures and encounters in this book should be usable at some point in the campaign. The fiery descent into Avernus (see “Hell’s Bonds,” page 70) could be followed by deeper delving into hell or a retreat to a safe base. In a dungeon-crawling campaign, the altercation with astral giants on Shom (see “Purifiers of Shom,” page 122) could lead to an adventure beneath Shom’s shifting sands in the vaults of the illumians instead of intrigue with Erathis and her Game of Making. The options are endless.

“The Monolith Stirs” mini-adventure (page 110) set on the island of Erishani is already set up as a one-session encounter for epic tier characters.

SIGIL

Adventurers who want to explore the Plane Above without traversing its hazardous sea often take up residence in Sigil, the infamous City of Doors. This densely populated and geometrically improbable settlement is everywhere and nowhere at once. It occupies the inner surfaces of a toroidal structure floating in an undefined pocket dimension. Countless gates and portals to earthly realms and extraplanar realities riddle its smoky, byzantine streets. The most stable gates have been used to create outposts. These fortresses and hideaways in the planes serve as way stations for travelers and miscreants of all varieties. Examples include Blackhelm, a fortified and perpetually besieged city within a city (Chernoggar), the sumptuous lagoon isle of Chapelton (Hestavar), and a dank metal chamber beneath Baator’s city of Darkspine (Nine Hells), entered by leaping into one of countless small pits of lava and praying to have chosen correctly.

Residence in Sigil is not for the fainthearted; the city is anarchic and inhabited by some of the most dangerous beings in existence. Even so, it is a place driven by mortal motivations and behaviors. For this reason, adventurers might find it a more congenial place to set up house than any of the locations described in this book. Explorers commonly take lodgings in the polyglot Market Ward, a bustling neighborhood where the goods and services they require are most readily at hand.

For more on Sigil, see *Manual of the Planes* and *Dungeon Master’s Guide* 2.

DUNGEONS

Numerous locations in the dominions and wider Astral Sea can be used as dungeonlike environments when you want to set up a dungeon crawl. Here's a small set of possibilities.

The divine dominion of Arvandor has contained Hunting Grounds in which allies of Corellon and Sehanine pursue abominations that would otherwise break out into Arvandor or the wider Astral Sea. The origins and explanations of this "Glorious Hunt" appear on page 38. The Hunting Lands that look most like dungeons are the Dead City of Carantharas (page 39) and the Reef Catacombs (page 39).

The various torture islands of the Outer Torments (page 76) are infested with dungeonlike underground environments populated by devils that have no interest in the well-being of their neighboring rival devils.

The labyrinthine plateaus and deep passages of Tytherion, the Dominion of Night, function as a sort of megadungeon populated by the warring servitors of two mutually antagonistic evil gods, Tiamat and Zehir. See page 80 for details on this location. At a somewhat lower power level, the island chain outside Tytherion, known as the Scales, has most of its culture underground, since dragon raiders from Tytherion scorch any creatures that show themselves on the surface.

Most of the gale-swept and ice-charred tunnels within the shattered dominion of Pandemonium are perfect for dungeon adventures.

The demon prince Rimmon's tomb on Kalandurren (page 115) is a dangerous place to delve, with impressive treasures. An opportunity no self-respecting dungeon crawler could refuse.

FIGHT ASTRAL PIRATES

Could an Astral Sea be complete without astral pirates? We'll never have to find out. Happily for those who enjoy smashing pirates' hopes of plunder, the Astral Sea is plagued by at least four principal factions of dangerous raiders, each with lethal strengths and exploitable weaknesses.

THE PREDATORS

The factions most likely to mount hit-and-run raids on vessels in the Astral Sea, the border islands, and occasionally even the divine dominions, are the githyanki, the quom, servants of Zehir operating out of the dominion of Tytherion, and devils operating out of Asmodeus's dominion of the Nine Hells.

Githyanki motivations are discussed in detail on page 94. As pirates, the githyanki function slightly differently from how they do when they are engaged in pure military assaults. Although the githyanki are sadistic and evil killers, they usually recognize that massacring all their victims and burning what they can't haul to their ships will prevent their victims

from generating more wealth to plunder in the future. When attacking defenseless ships of the border islands, or poorly defended areas of the border islands, the githyanki make a point of slaying a few random victims in spectacular fashion, then killing anyone who makes any show of resistance. Other wounds and abuse are at the discretion of the raiders' captain, but it's bad for the long-term prosperity of the githyanki for them to wipe out their targets or to repeatedly raid already-plundered communities before those communities have had time to rebuild their stores.

Ironically, the military-minded githyanki don't like being reminded of the husbandry overtones of their raids. Anyone who tries to play on githyanki mercy or economic self-interest while they are being raided is likely to trigger a murderous rage, and the raid shifts into full military mode, leaving no survivors. For this reason, few of the githyanki of the Astral Sea bother with kidnapping. It might turn out to be profitable, but it's clearly a criminal act rather than a military operation, and thus beneath them.

As detailed on page 101, the quom are motivated by religious zealotry, not a simple taste for plunder and mayhem. A quom attack might be swift and surgical, but result in nothing more serious than a few minor wounds, so long as no one fights back. More commonly, someone or something dies horribly. If an entire group has consumed food that contains traces of the quom's dead god, the entire community will be eliminated. Unlike githyanki raids, quom attacks are random.

After the githyanki and the quom, the two powers that are most likely to mount far-reaching raids are cultists of Zehir (sailing out of Tytherion) and devils from the Nine Hells or the Outer Torments. Though their abilities are far different, the methods and goals of the creatures of these evil dominions have much in common. Unlike the githyanki and the quom, the creatures of Zehir and the Hells principally seek living captives, not plunder.

Both prefer to use dominion ships (page 21), but they will use any other available vessel when those rare craft are not available. Both choose outsiders on the border islands as their favored targets, settling for anyone in a vulnerable vessel if sweeps of the islands fail to turn up prey. Both want living captives, rather than dead victims.

Zehir's cult in Tytherion (page 82) is obsessed with the sacrifice of sentient beings. Captives taken by Zehir's servitors are meant to survive until they can be prepared for ritual sacrifice in Tytherion.

Those caught by hell's slavers bound for the Outer Torments or the Soul Market (page 76) can be rescued without requiring an all-out assault on hell itself. Captives added to the population of the damned in the interior layers of hell would require rescue operations more sophisticated than a smash-and-grab assault.

THE PREY

The targets that have the least to fear from these raiders are the exalted inside the dominions. As a rule, none of the four raider groups have enough power to mount large-scale invasions of the dominions. Small raiding groups can slip in, in the same manner that groups of adventurers can sneak into dominions where they are not wanted. But the lethal force used against intruders within the dominions pushes the raiders toward weaker prey.

The easiest targets are lone or scattered outsiders on the border islands. Such outsiders don't tend to have much in the way of material possessions, so they're generally not targeted by the githyanki, are randomly of interest to the quom, and are perfectly suitable for the slavers of Tytherion and the Nine Hells.

Ships and towns of the more prosperous border islands are the githyanki's preferred targets: they're well defended enough to pose a challenge, require military skill to overcome, and are rich enough to bother plundering. Examples of towns and settlements that draw the most attention from the githyanki include Starhallow in the Green Isles outside Arvandor (page 42), Stouthome in the Foothills near Celestia (page 47), and Luethvar and the Townships in the Daybreak Islands outside Hestavar (page 64).

THE REWARDS

Characters who spend a significant amount of their time and effort tracking and smashing pirates frequently want to adopt piratical mannerisms. Indulge them. A group of adventurers who strike fear into the hearts of githyanki captains would make fine recipients of a fast dominion ship and the patronage of one of the great dominions.

Another likely patron would be a couatl using the characters as its proxies in the Great Chase (page 92).

CHANGE THE WORLD

Of course, any campaign that follows pirate-crushing themes into the epic tier should gear up for conflicts that shape the world instead of merely eliminating certain monsters. To use the githyanki as an example, campaigns during epic tier play involving opposition of the githyanki will eventually lead to direct conflict with the githyanki home city of Tu'narath. The lich-queen Vlaakith (page 149), the githyanki empress, is a 21st-level solo controller, so a campaign arc that pits the characters against the githyanki, strength for strength, should either be timed to reach its peak in the low levels of the epic tier or designed to push the githyanki story beyond Vlaakith's death.

The Astral IncurSION campaign arc could prepare the characters for just such an epic tier confrontation with Vlaakith in Tu'narath.

THE ASTRAL INCURSION CAMPAIGN ARC

The characters discover a world-shattering threat from the githyanki and must travel across the planes to stop it.

PARAGON TIER:

DISCOVER A GITHYANKI INVASION

This campaign arc begins at mid-paragon tier (about 14th or 15th level) and brings the player characters up through early epic tier. The arc begins when the player characters receive treasure at the conclusion of an adventure. Among the treasure is an ornate scroll tube that contains detailed charts of the Astral Sea, with images, navigation lines, and runes that move across each chart as the characters watch. The charts form a navigational map, stolen long ago from the captain of a githyanki vessel. When the magic of the charts activates, it acts like a beacon, sending a signal into the Astral Sea and alerting the githyanki that the charts are in the hands of the player characters. Within days, githyanki raiders travel to the world and attack the characters, attempting to recover the charts. As the characters investigate the truth behind the attacks, they learn the true nature of the charts and the map they form. They also discover the location of a great treasure within the Astral Sea mentioned on the charts.

The player characters make their way to the Astral Sea through a portal left behind by the githyanki raiders. The portal leads them to Skelzerann, the shipyards of the githyanki, where they find a huge fleet of astral vessels being amassed. On further investigation, the player characters learn that the githyanki are preparing for an all-out invasion of the Far Realm. To open a portal to the Far Realm, the githyanki need an artifact known as the *Codex of Infinite Planes*, a book whose pages have been scattered across the Astral Sea. They likewise learn that the portal to the Far Realm cannot be opened in the Plane Above, but only in the characters' own world, and that the invasion fleet from Skelzerann plans to use the characters' world as a staging ground for an invasion of the Far Realm. The *Codex* can be used not only to open this portal, but also to prevent such a portal from being created in the future.

One of the githyanki navigational charts points the way to the scattered parts of the *Codex*, and the characters spend several adventures racing against the githyanki (and occasionally fighting them off) to obtain the various pieces of the *Codex* first. As the characters acquire more parts of the *Codex*, they encounter increasingly fierce opposition from the githyanki, prompting the invasion force leader, General Tythorian, to mobilize the incursion into the characters' world ahead of time to secure the location where the portal is to be opened.



EPIC TIER: STOP THE GITHYANKI INVASION

With their world invaded by the githyanki, the player characters must find a way into the heart of the incursion and use the *Codex of Infinite Planes* to sever the tenuous connections between the world and the Far Realm. The player characters learn that a member of the Court of Stars, a powerful fey witch-queen known as Morgylla, is sympathetic to their cause and has little desire to see a gate opened to the Far Realm, fearing that its denizens could use that same gate to invade the world and the Feywild. The characters must convince Morgylla to lend them her aid—and the aid of her iron dragon allies—in breaching the githyanki defenses, which will allow them to use the *Codex* to prevent the portal from opening and plunging the Astral Sea into madness.

FIGHT THE GODS OF EVIL

Why settle for fighting pirates and raiders when you are adventuring on the home plane of the evil gods? Most campaigns pit the characters against the servants of the evil gods at some point. As the characters grow in power and fight cosmic battles, the angels and exarchs of the evil gods often match up as the obvious foes.

Chapter 2 begins with discussions of the activities and motives of each of the deities, even those who do not have a dominion in the Astral Sea. Later in the chapter, a detailed presentation of the divine dominions discusses the motives, goals, and possible plans of the evil gods' agents and exarchs. You can use these stories as if they are the full truth, or use them as merely the first layer of deeper and more dangerous plans that the characters will have to uncover in order to succeed.

The simplest use of this theme is to treat the dominions of the evil gods as targets for the characters to infiltrate at the paragon tier, invade at the epic tier, and perhaps ultimately destroy by the end of the campaign. The dominion material, and the border island information that follows each of the dominion sections in Chapter 2, contains material that assumes that the characters will carry the fight to the evil gods' dominions. Although few heroic tier characters could hope to survive inside Tytherion, Chernoggar, or the Nine Hells, the individual dominion write-ups describe what adventuring is like in the dominion for paragon and epic tier characters.

Of all the campaign themes, the fight against the gods of evil becomes most satisfying when story elements introduced early in the campaign turn out to have cosmic consequences in the final stages of the game. The Gods War campaign arc (below) turns this form of gradual revelation into the campaign's major focus. More standard campaigns still benefit from the sense that the agents of the evil gods have long-running plans, which the characters discover slowly, glimpse in fragments, and must eventually thwart in order to achieve their own epic destinies.

KNOWN THREATS

"Bane's Strategy" on page 52 presents a god of war who stands ready to invade any other location in the Astral Sea despite the supposed distraction of his war with Gruumsh on Chernoggar. The fact that Bane has not launched a serious conquest of a dominion or a faction he considers weak should be seen as a temporary situation. When your campaign requires a new spin, consider using some of the many ideas given in "The War Expands" on page 58.

Gruumsh is a force for chaos. When Bane sends soldiers to seize a border island, he does so to gain a tactical advantage. Outside the Chernoggar war zone, Gruumsh's battlesworn and other agents operate more randomly. As discussed in "Gruumsh's Wrath" on page 53, the god of destruction has no long-term plan aside from the destruction of Bane. But that doesn't mean he won't make new enemies.

Asmodeus engineered the murder of his patron deity and his ascension from the ignominy of eternal punishment to immortal power as a major god (see the story of Asmodeus on page 65). Many of the evils of the Astral Sea flow directly, or indirectly, from Asmodeus's perversion of a divine dominion into the Nine Hells, which Asmodeus fashioned as a torture engine for the creation of magical energy. Although the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven and the ravages of the Dawn War weakened the other gods, Asmodeus became stronger. The Nine Hells, or at least the Outer Torments that surround them (page 76), make perfect targets for characters who want to proactively strike against the worst of the world's oppressors.

Zehir's agents seem preoccupied with their endless hunt for sacrifices to their deity. Of all the evil gods, Zehir is probably the least active outside his dominion, presumably because he is preoccupied with trying to push Tiamat out of the dominion she invaded (page 80).

GODS WAR CAMPAIGN ARC

This campaign arc demonstrates the potential of fully embracing the fight against the evil gods as a campaign theme.

As a renewed Dawn War threatens to destroy the Plane Above, the characters discover their secret divine identities.

HEROIC TIER: DIVINE SPARKS

During character creation, stipulate that the characters all have one detail in common—they were born on the same day. For races that have especially short or long life spans, work with players to create story

justifications for their unusually early or late starts as adventurers. At the first session, ask the players to specify the strange set of coincidences that brought the group together.

Initially the characters appear to be nothing more than the usual assemblage of ambitious wayfarers, wandering from one seemingly random adventure to the next. Gradually, a divine theme emerges. Their adventures take place in temples and holy sites, ruined or otherwise. Religious fervor motivates their enemies, who are sworn to evil gods. Clerics and priests become their central patrons.

As the heroic tier continues, group members gradually come to doubt the stories they've been told about their parentage. Foundlings and orphans discover the mysterious details of their births. The characters who thought they had parents and families discover that they were adopted.

As the players reveal their characters' motives and personalities through play, associate each of them with one of the good gods. You can either pick the obvious choices, or you can go farther afield if doing so seems appropriate. A cleric of Erathis who continually demonstrates gung-ho fury in combat might actually be connected to Kord. A character associated with Bahamut need not be a dragonborn, and so on.

At the conclusion of the tier's climactic battle, the victorious characters suddenly undergo apotheosis. In a shudder of radiant energy, they shuck off their early bodies, like butterflies emerging from their larval forms.

PARAGON TIER: YOUNG AVATARS

The adventurers reappear on a mist-swept isle in the Astral Sea, where the angel Norelle appears to them and reveals the truth. They were not born. They were fashioned as earthly incarnations of the gods. There were others like them, but they did not survive their earthly tests. The gods fashioned them in response to a prophecy of coming war. According to the oracles, the gods themselves might be somehow removed from the field when the moment of truth comes. Now Norelle will guide the characters on a series of missions to hone their divine natures.

The young avatars roam the planes, discovering plots by servitors of the evil gods to lay the groundwork for the coming war. Inquiries into the prophesied downfall of the gods yield only tantalizing hints. If the characters resent the thought of losing their identities to the gods who made them, they run into situations that stoke these feelings.

Slowly, they realize that Norelle might not be what he seems. Partway through the tier, he is revealed as a turncoat, working for the primordials and the gods of chaos.

The final encounter of the tier is with a group of formerly mortal avatars of the same gods as the

DUELING WITH DEITIES

Since the days of the first *Deities & Demigods* supplement for the original D&D game, players and DMs have felt the irresistible lure of pitting their high-level characters against the gods directly. The game still makes possible this style of play, though slaying a god should be a very difficult process, even for powerful epic tier characters.

There's plenty of support in this volume for campaigns that fight against the evil gods' plans, their dominions, and their servitors. But this book isn't oriented toward setting up a god-slaying campaign.

characters, counterparts who have been turned to evil by Norelle's sibling, Karjeen.

EPIC TIER: THE TOMORROW GODS

The first encounter of the epic tier is a battle with Norelle as he attempts to escape. If he dies, his vengeful brother will return later, choosing a time when the characters are vulnerable.

The new war begins. Rippling energy from the destruction of immortal combatants dims the silvery light of the Astral Sea. This event inspires the conflagration's name: the Dusk War.

Many of the evil gods cast aside old rivalries to unite against the heavenly realms alongside chaos. The deities appoint the characters as their generals. They decide whether to protect their territories or invade the infernal realms.

At the upper end of the epic tier (level 28 or 29), the god each character incarnates is destroyed when Tharizdun, loosed from his chains, executes a suicide attack against them. The player characters are now the last sparks of the slain gods—and they can become those gods, if they survive the final fight against the evil gods.

JOIN HEAVEN'S ORDER

Many epic tier campaigns experiment with the idea that one or more of the characters become exarchs serving a particular deity, or exarchs in their own right. Campaigns set in the Astral Sea place these transformations into context.

A character who becomes an exarch might have a divine dominion that now functions as his or her true home. With a small bit of negotiation, an exarch could extend the advantages of his or her new home to the rest of his or her powerful allies, as long as none of them was an actual enemy of the character's deity.

By examining the Astral Sea, a character who becomes an independent demigod understands clearly that most of the true gods have their own dominions. Is there some way a group of demigods could arrange to have their own dominion? As proven by Erathis's intention to restore Shom (page 62), the answer is probably yes. What might be true of Shom could also be true of shattered dominions such as Kalandurren (page 114) or Pandemonium (page 116). A single god might not have the power or versatility to restore a shattered dominion, but a group of epic characters with unified destiny quests to restore a dominion and make it their own is a story worth playing.

To help such grand stories grow naturally out of play, *The Plane Above* includes information on the motives, hidden problems, and long-term goals of the good and unaligned deities, as well as their angels (page 32). Arvandor, Celestia, and Hestavar are not just adventure sites, they are also the homes of the character's greatest prospective employers and the models for the type of environment the characters might one day create themselves.

DIVINE TASKS

While the characters rampage freely around the Astral Sea, the deities have to devote a great deal of their power to tasks that maintain creation, the proper functioning of the world, and the strength of their dominions.

Ongoing Creation and Defense of the World: The gods created the mortal races along with most pieces of the world that still sustain mortals' lives. Although the primal spirits have inherited an active supernatural presence in the world, helping to sustain it and making up for all the gods who died in the Dawn War, the primal spirits would not be able to keep the primordials at bay if not for the gods' continuing magical support of the world's defenses.

Maintaining the Flow of Divine Power through the Worlds: Player characters and other powerful beings that draw on the divine power source typically earn their powers through investiture. Neither a deity nor its servitors needs to personally empower a cleric's prayers; rather, the cleric has gained the ability to control divine magic through an initiation ritual particular to his or her god. But if a god does not spend some effort sending power through the world and the world's echoes, the efficacy of its worshippers'

powers and rituals would eventually dwindle. In extreme cases, the divine powers of characters worshipping a neglectful god would take a -1 penalty to attack rolls and damage rolls, then a -2 penalty, and so on. Such problems would be the visible symptom of a deeper and more dangerous problem, which is why new gods usually move quickly to try to inherit a dead god's power.

Maintaining and Expanding their Dominion: Gods that are part of a functioning dominion spend a large amount of their attention and energy holding it together and trying to increase its power, particularly when their exalted are attempting to increase the dominion's size by absorbing a border island (page 36). Some deities without dominions of their own, such as Avandra and Melora, share a portion of their power with gods who provide their exalted with a home dominion.

Gathering Strength: Mythic history shows that even the strongest gods eventually require every weapon in their arsenal to survive. In periods of cosmic stalemate, such as the present day, deities gather strength, alternately concealing or revealing their power level from their peers as it suits them.

FRIENDS AMONG THE EXALTED

Even if the characters aren't on the path of ascension, the friendly dominions can be places where they naturally take part in activities normally pursued by exalted and angels.

Arvandor offers the Glorious Hunt (page 38), a dangerous hunt for abominations. Characters who excel in the Glorious Hunt earn the favor of Corellon, Sehanine, Avandra, and Melora even if they have no intention of ultimately serving those gods.

Celestia welcomes powerful warriors to the Game of Mountains (page 46), a wargame contest played seasonally among Celestia's peaks that shapes the dominion's magic for the months to come. The Game of Mountains gives allies a chance to test their strength against each other while cementing alliances that could prove decisive in real battles. Kord's fears of the final Dusk War (page 45) could prove unfounded, but if he is right, it will be to the characters' benefit to be in his good graces and have learned of his fears by excelling in the Game of Mountains.

Additionally, Bahamut needs help with his new Ark (page 46), and Erathis needs help with her Game of Making (page 62). Behind the scenes, Pelor desperately needs assistance dealing with the fragments of the Living Gate (page 63). And whenever one of the dominions attempts to draw a border island into itself (page 36), assistance from adventurers can mean the difference between success and failure.

OVERCOME HEAVEN'S FLAWS

It's possible that the noblest response to the current problems of the flawed heavens would be to end the injustice by which some souls become exalted and others exiled from their heaven, living as outsiders.

Bahamut thinks so; see "Bahamut's Arks" on page 46. The Game of Making (page 62) might be less concerned with the fate of individual outsiders and more concerned with increasing the power of Erathis. It's true that if Erathis's plan to restore the destroyed dominions succeeds, the next step could be to build a new Lattice of Heaven. Unless the Lattice was subverted by Asmodeus or otherwise corrupted, it could increase the number of souls that receive their just rewards as exalted.

Given Erathis's current problems getting the right help (see "Purifiers of Shom," page 122), her Game of Making might already have set off on a corrupt path. Perhaps the characters can restore perspective before it's too late.

Characters who care deeply about such issues, possibly as a consequence of friendships with particular outsiders, could come up with their own solutions that do not depend on the plans of the gods. The

following campaign arc shows one bizarre path in which overcoming the tragedy of the flawed heaven eventually becomes the point.

THE OUTSIDERS CAMPAIGN ARC

Although this campaign arc grants the characters a long-delayed triumph in the end, it spends much of its time withholding the power-fantasy thrills that D&D traditionally supplies. Run it for groups that you know you can ruthlessly challenge.

HEROIC TIER: THE ALSO-RANS

The characters pursue their adventuring careers in haphazard fashion. Frequently finding themselves at loose ends, they stumble into dungeons, randomly struggle against unrelated enemies, and pick up plot hooks from the usual assortment of tavern riffraff. Their battles are as tough as any group's, but tend not to be rewarded as extensively. Whenever they seek greatness, it narrowly eludes them. They perform heroically against an orc horde, but see another adventuring band win accolades for an even more decisive victory against the orc chieftain. When they head back to the inn to boast of a zombie-killing spree, they find flagons being hoisted to a group of similar stature who managed to stake a vampire. They survive an episode of political intrigue only to learn they were pawns in a greater scheme.

Oracles, omens, and prophecies crop up on a regular basis. Whenever they peer into their future, the characters learn that they are almost destined for greatness, but that they will always be a day late and a silver coin short.

As the tier reaches its climax, the characters finally come upon the chance to make their mark. They discover a plot by an evil high priest to flood the world with abominations from the Astral Sea. Over a series of increasingly momentous encounters, they track the priest to his lair.

The priest is a 15th-level solo creature. At this point, mercilessly kill the party. For one encounter only, every tenet of fair play goes out the window. If the group seems poised to take him out, pour in more opposition.

PARAGON TIER: MISPLACED SOULS

Just because the characters are dead doesn't mean the campaign ends. Don't tell the players right away, but things will look up soon.

The characters materialize as outsiders on the shoals of a lonely astral archipelago near the Outer Torments. The island is ruled by a cackling devil named Brethan. He captures stray soulforms, selling them to the highest bidder, and he has had his eye on the characters for a long time. They were successful enough to reach the Astral Sea, but apparently not worthy of exalted status and a place in any of the true

dominions. Brethan plans to sell them to slavers from the Nine Hells who will imprison them in Baator.

By defeating Brethan and his customers, the characters win their autonomy. Now they can freely wander the Astral Sea, looking for a home. Although able to make themselves useful as wandering adventurers, they're excluded from the dominions of the gods. Run-ins with exalted induce great envy. The characters even meet their former earthly rivals, now exalted dead resplendent in holy armor and regalia.

As their reward for a climactic battle late in the paragon tier, the characters learn that their fate might not be immutable. Apparently, the tragedy of the dominions is not an inescapable consequence of the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven. According to the characters' new information, Asmodeus's remodeling of Baator is to blame. Asmodeus designed the Nine Hells to grab as many souls as possible, which overloaded the system of soulform collection that the dominions were designed to support.

EPIC TIER: BEATING HELL INTO A HEAVEN

By seeking to confront Asmodeus and fix the divine afterlife, the characters pit themselves against the forces of hell. They eventually learn that the architect of the problem was a servitor of Asmodeus that was locked away in Carceri by his god. The rest of the gods are powerless to release the prisoner, so the characters will have to handle the jailbreak.

Of course, the abomination plague is the first thing that breaks free. Perhaps the characters handle it themselves, or perhaps they have acquired a following of outsiders that understand the stakes and will serve the characters as an army of the dispossessed.

As the tier reaches its climax, the characters learn that the Nine Hells wouldn't be the only dominion destroyed if they were to undo its twisted magic. Many other dominions would perish also, unable to cope with the increased numbers of exalted.

The perfect solution for the characters would be to overthrow the Nine Hells and set themselves up as the gods of the outsiders. As a result, all willing outsiders—rejected by their former deities—would become the characters' exalted. Thus do the lowly become the greatest power in the multiverse.

ADVENTURE INTO MYTH

The final theme takes advantage of the blend of myth, history, and conflict permeating the Plane Above to suggest campaign-transforming adventures. Rather than merely learning about the pivotal moments of mythic history as past events, the characters could travel into the past to participate in, and possibly change, the events that shaped the world. You will have to determine the extent to which you want the characters to be able to alter your modern game

world through their actions deep in the mythological past. This is a chance to shake up the foundations of reality that your players have taken for granted until the epic tier.

Not every DM will be interested in running this type of adventure, so artifacts, rituals, or locations that can send the characters into the long-ago world of deep myth aren't included in this book. Traveling into deep myth should be presented as an extremely significant act that is far more meaningful than normal adventures. If you are interested in including this theme in your game, feel free to make a journey into deep myth the focus of an entire sequence of adventures. One adventure might ascertain the location of the spot where the characters could enter a particular location in deep myth. The next adventure might uncover the ritual that works in that location. The third adventure might recover the artifact that allows travel into deep myth when used with the ritual at that location.

DEEP MYTH STRUCTURE

One possible structure is to set three possible success levels for deep myth adventures. The characters need to know something about the probable effects of success or failure, but should not have perfect understanding of all of their victory's consequences, so that they can be pleasantly surprised.

Failure: The world the characters return to is even worse than the world they knew.

Success: The world the characters return to is much the same as the world they left, but their own place in the world has markedly improved.

Complete Victory: The world is somehow greatly improved by the characters' success in the past.

Here are two examples of deep myth adventures and their possible consequences to demonstrate potential storylines.

INVASION OF KALANDURREN

After an adventure in "modern" Kalandurren, the shattered dominion infested with demons and arena-crazed nihilists (page 114), set a subsequent adventure back in deep myth during the original invasion of Kalandurren by Orcus, Rimmon, and Demogorgon.

Failure: The invasion ruins Kalandurren, and it also scars a portion of the Astral Sea that was previously untouched by the demon princes.

Success: Kalandurren is still in ruins, and the characters—not Amoth—slay the demon prince Rimmon, thereby gaining powers over demons and a stake in the magic of Kalandurren. Over the course of a few levels of adventures, the characters might be able to purge Kalandurren and remake it into a dominion that suits them.

Complete Victory: The characters prevent the demon invasion from killing Amoth. Perhaps the god survives by traveling forward with the characters. Now he is alive and owes the characters a huge favor. He might want to reclaim his dominion, or he might leave that to the characters. Someone also needs to conclude unfinished business with Orcus (*Monster Manual*, page 206) and Demogorgon (*Monster Manual 2*, page 42); give the characters the task they prefer and send Amoth to take care of the other threat.

BAHAMUT, LAKAL, AND NIHIL

For the full story of Lakal's death from a fight between the god Bahamut and a primordial known as Nihil, see page 101. Characters who have had many of their friends and allies killed by the quom could seek an elegant solution to the ever-present problem they pose. The quom are murdering fanatics, but Lakal herself was blameless. There might be a way to save Lakal without harming Bahamut if the characters are willing to travel into the past to help kill Nihil, precluding the need to sacrifice Lakal.

Failure: Depending on the manner in which the characters fail, Lakal might survive while Bahamut is

maimed. Play up the consequences of a cosmos with a maimed god of justice. Alternatively, Lakal could die as before, and the being that the quom are still diligently assembling is now Nihil, not Lakal. As the characters return to the current timeline, the quom are close to restoring Nihil.

Success: The characters return with Lakal's still-beating heart. The merciful deity extends her influence across the Astral Sea, asking the characters to protect her from quom driven mad by the shame of their fall from Lakal's merciful ways. One problem exists, however, because Nihil seems to have returned to life along with Lakal. Nihil draws some primordials up from the Elemental Chaos, and the characters must fight to prevent the second primordial invasion from destroying the rest of the Plane Above.

Complete Victory: Lakal is restored in a burst of power. The quom, except for those who have gone insane, begin helping heal the scars of the Dawn War. Lakal asks her champions, the characters, to help with the final task of "healing" those quom who can't be saved and starts the process by cursing these outcasts by warping them with lopsided features (see page 102 for the quom aesthetic of symmetry).

TRAVELING THE ASTRAL SEA

At some point, the characters might want to travel through the Astral Sea. Here are rules to keep in mind while journeying through the astral realm.

MODES OF TRAVEL

There are three common methods used for point-to-point travel through the astral realm: flying, swimming, and sailing. All three amount to the same rough speeds of locomotion and interact more or less identically with astral hazards and navigation.

Flying: Creatures that are natural flyers have no trouble flying through the Astral Sea. As flyers, they also have no problem rising above the astral horizon. Flying below the astral horizon is psychologically more difficult because it seems like being underwater.

Swimming: In theory, swimming creatures should have no trouble traveling through the Astral Sea. They can manage bursts of speed and trips of several hours as well as flyers can. But in practice, over long periods of time, swimming through the raw astral stuff drains creatures' energy, costing them one healing surge for every two hours spent swimming through the Astral Sea. These healing surges can be regained as normal with an extended rest. Traversing the Astral Sea within the color veils of dominions and other powerful motes is not as draining upon the

mind and body, however, and does not cause the loss of healing surges.

Sailing: Most humanoids think of the silver astral realm as a sea. *Astral skiffs*, *planar dromonds*, *spell-jammers*, githyanki pirate ships, quom raiders, and the various dominion ships treat the Plane Above as if it were a great ocean. They're greatly aided in this belief by the constant astral winds that make actual sailing more reliable than it is on the world's oceans. The advantage and drawback of navigation by sailing is that sailors fall naturally into the pattern of orienting themselves along the astral horizon. This mindset is an advantage because the color strands that extend out from the dominions tend to manifest along the horizon line rather than above or below it, allowing those who sail along the horizon to sometimes use the strands to greatly shorten their journey. The disadvantage is that sailors often miss more subtle sites hidden above or below the astral horizon.

See "Navigating the Astral Sea" on page 25 for rules for sailing to specific destinations point-to-point or by the quicker route of finding the right color strand and using its magic to teleport to a location a few miles from the destination.

SHIP-TO-SHIP COMBAT IN THE ASTRAL SEA

Ship-to-ship battles in the Astral Sea usually play out as fights between the crews and passengers of the ships. A typical fight starts with missile combat between the ships' passengers followed by a boarding action. Such combat usually ends with one side surrendering or being slain rather than with a vessel being disabled.

Few combatants want to destroy enemy vessels outright. They're worth far more as plunder than as debris. Few astral vessels carry armaments that do any significant amount of damage to other ships. And unlike seagoing vessels, astral vessels don't sink when they've been damaged, unless you rule otherwise, though they could require repairs to function again.

Most powers used by player characters and monsters are much more effective at damaging creatures than objects. At your option, characters could use appropriate powers against enemy vessels rather than against enemy creatures. In such cases, you should reduce the damage of single-target attacks while allowing area attacks to deal normal damage if those attacks target only the enemy vessel and not any enemy creatures.

ASTRAL VEHICLES

The five vessels that player characters are most likely to use to sail the Astral Sea are the *astral clipper* and *astral schooner* detailed below, and the *astral skiff*, *planar dromond*, and *spelljammer* detailed in *Manual of the Planes* (page 159).

Astral vessels aren't necessarily for sale in every port of the Astral Sea. Hestavar and the Daybreak Islands are the most likely places to find a full selection of vehicles for sale. The ports of Starhallow and Luethvar often have a full selection of astral vessels available. Other ports in the Foothills or the Green Isles usually have at least one vessel for sale, even if it's just a broken-down skiff at full price.

Of course, the time-honored method of acquiring a better vessel by seizing it from the first astral pirates who make the mistake of attacking you is still the most cost-efficient method.

ASTRAL CLIPPER

Based on design concepts pioneered by the githyanki, these sleek vessels have become much more common in recent decades thanks to nongithyanki shipyards in Arvandor and in border island cities such as Starhallow and Luethvar.

Great mesh sails on multiple masts catch the magic winds of the Astral Sea to propel clippers faster than most other vessels as long as the crew remains attentive. Most have open decks similar to those on seafaring ships in order to serve as missile

and fighting platforms. Clippers built to avoid combat sometimes have enclosed decks fitted with hatches, but such designs are uncommon, because they risk yielding the ship to boarders. Gleaming rods extend out from the hull to provide control and stability.

Astral Clipper

Gargantuan vehicle

HP 350 Space 4 squares by 10 squares Cost 21,000 gp

AC 3; Fortitude 20, Reflex 2

Speed fly 14 (hover), overland flight 18

Pilot

The pilot must stand at a control wheel, typically at the rear of the *astral clipper*.

Crew

In addition to the pilot, an *astral clipper* requires a crew of four, all of whom use a standard action each round to control the clipper. Reduce the clipper's fly speed by 4 squares for each missing crew member. At fly speed 0, an *astral clipper* sails out of control.

Load

Twenty five Medium creatures; thirty tons of cargo.

Out of Control

An out-of-control *astral clipper* moves forward at half speed (not including any modifiers for its astral sails).

Sails

An *astral clipper* takes a penalty or bonus to its fly speed from -4 to +4 depending on the strength and direction of the wind.

Astral Attunement

An *astral clipper* functions only in the Astral Sea.

Fragile Propulsion

For every 100 damage an *astral clipper* takes, its speed is reduced by 2 squares. At fly speed 0, the ship comes to a stop.

ASTRAL SCHOONER

Astral schooners sacrifice speed for carrying capacity, allowing them to hold more passengers and cargo belowdecks.

Astral Schooner

Gargantuan vehicle

HP 550 Space 4 squares by 10 squares Cost 85,000 gp

AC 3; Fortitude 20, Reflex 2

Speed fly 10 (hover), overland flight 16

Pilot

The pilot must stand at a control wheel, typically at the rear of the *astral schooner*.

Crew

In addition to the pilot, an *astral schooner* requires a crew of six, all of whom use a standard action each round to control the schooner. Reduce the schooner's fly speed by 2 squares for each missing crew member. At fly speed 0, an *astral schooner* sails out of control.

Load

Fifty Medium creatures; fifty tons of cargo.

Out of Control

An out-of-control *astral schooner* moves forward at half speed (not including any modifiers for its astral sails).

Astral Attunement

An *astral schooner* functions only in the Astral Sea.

Fragile Propulsion

For every 100 damage an *astral schooner* takes, its speed is reduced by 2 squares. At fly speed 0, the ship comes to a stop.

DOMINION SHIPS

Each of the divine dominions has between five and a dozen specially designed *astral skiffs*, *astral clippers*, and *astral schooners* to use for important missions and military expeditions. Life in the Plane Above is not always a grim contest for survival, so dominion ships are also frequently used by the exalted for trading, sightseeing, and joyriding. The craft used by the various dominions look extremely different from each other. Use the given advantages to customize the statistics for the clipper, schooner, or skiff.

Dominion ships aren't precious simply because they look good, but rather because they allow the exalted of a particular dominion to travel the Astral Sea and still benefit from their dominion's resurrection power. The dominion ships tap into the Astral Sea's memory of the original Lattice of Heaven. Each dominion ship extends the resurrecting power of the dominion to an exalted who dies onboard or within 100 yards of the craft. The exalted are not resurrected on the ship, but return to life back in their god's dominion. Death on a dominion ship isn't taken lightly, however, because it is harder on the soulforms than death in the deity's dominion.

The rituals that power and enchant dominion ships are centrally controlled from the divine dominion. If enemies take a ship, its magic will be revoked, leaving it to drift as a powerless hunk of well-crafted wood and metal.

POLITICS AND SHIPMATES

Allied deities who share a dominion have pooled their magic so that exalted of any of the gods of the dominion can be found on any of its ships. Ships from these dominions often mix features and decoration belonging to the dominion's gods.

Enemy gods who happen to share a dominion have separate dominion ships. The warring Bane and Gruumsh and the hostile Zehir and Tiamat each have their own separate dominion ships, and each considers destruction of the other's dominion ships a great coup.

DOMINION SHIPS AND THE CHARACTERS

As mentioned in the "Campaign Themes" section, circumstances such as the favor of a god could lead to the characters piloting a dominion ship. If the





Arvandor dominion ships

characters prefer the independent route, use the following advantages as a guide for ways that the characters might be able to upgrade their vessels without falling back on the power of a dominion.

SHIPS OF THE DOMINIONS

Each group of dominion ships has a slight mechanical advantage that can be used to modify the statistics of a specific ship. In addition, all dominion ships carry their dominion's energy affinity, so that, for example,

those aboard Hestavar's dominion ships (radiance affinity) gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with radiant attacks and deal half damage with necrotic attacks.

ARVANDOR

Arvandor's graceful craft are among the swiftest ships of the Astral Sea. Corellon and Schanine command a fleet of between eight and a dozen ships.

Advantage: The craft gains speed +4 when at least one crew member spends an action to sail it.



Bane dominion ships



Celestia dominion ship

Typical Names: Names follow either elven simplicity or eladrin elegance. Known ships include *Arrow of the Court*, *Broadleaf*, *Crater Maker*, *Falcon*, and *Homeward Spiral*.

BANE

Bane's forces send far too many ships into the Shrapnels (page 59) and beyond to use dominion ships exclusively, especially since invasions and most military actions require larger ships. Encountering Bane's dominion ships is a sign that something serious is afoot. Compared to other dominion ships, Bane's ships tend to sacrifice speed for the ability to carry more marines for boarding actions or landings.

Advantage: +25 percent crew capacity (but -2 to overland flight speed).

Typical Names: *Fist of Iron*, *Orcslayer*, *Slaughter*, *Tuern's Remorse*.

CELESTIA

Celestia's ships blend the solidity of Moradin's mountains with Kord's storm magic and roosts for Bahamut's dragons. The size of Celestia's small fleet varies wildly: Moradin's workshops build new craft regularly, but the dominion's traveling exalted veer toward the reckless side, often crashing the ships into floating objects or powerful monsters. There are anywhere between four and eighteen in service at any given moment.

Advantage: +2 bonus to all defenses, +2 to overland speed.

Typical Names: *Coldbreath*, *Mercy*, *Old Quarrel*, *Smoking Hammer*, *Stormking*.

GRUUMSH

Missions on Gruumsh's ramshackle dominion ships are often one-way trips. The vessels can't always be trusted

to hold together for the return trip. Even if a ship remains viable, it's a toss-up whether the battlesworn aboard manage to get themselves killed on the craft and return to Chernoggar or head off on some other rampage, perhaps finding their way back eventually.

Advantage: When out of control, Gruumsh's dominion ships move at full speed.



Gruumsh dominion ships



Hestavar dominion ships

Typical Names: None—naming a ship is a fancy trick used by those who are not as strong as Gruumsh to make themselves feel better about their puny vessels.

HESTAVAR

The Game of Making provides Hestavar with the largest of the dominion fleets. As outlined on page 62, Erathis's plans for reestablishing the shattered dominions require a large fleet. One advantage of Hestavar's dominion ships is special lenses that enable those sailing in them to find Pelor's light no matter where they are in the Astral Sea, allowing them to orient themselves toward home.

Advantage: Improved point-to-point navigation (use the next-higher row on the astral navigation chart for the trip being taken), +2 to overland speed.

Typical Names: *Glorious Path*, *Pride of Hestavar*, *Rising Dawn*, *Torch of the Morning*.

THE NINE HELLS

The devils usually moor their hellships in Avernus or Dis. Such ships are rare—there are at most six. Asmodeus likes to use hellships because he prefers to present himself to the other dominions as a suave negotiator, and there's nothing diplomatic or ambassadorial about arriving in a clanking torture chariot. The “exalted” of the Hells are the damned, and hell's



Nine Hells dominion ship



Zehir dominion ships

dominion ships are unique in that they resurrect the “exalted” riding in them quite quickly. They have to, since the screaming deaths of the damned are the only magical medium that can power the hellships. Obviously, devils are the actual masters of the hellships, and just as obviously they don’t need dominion ships to get around the Astral Sea. They tend to use hellships when they want to intimidate their enemies.

Advantage: Those onboard gain a +2 bonus to Intimidate checks, and enemy boarders take a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends).

Typical Names: Most hellships are named after the form of torture that powers the craft: *Eyeball-Gouger*, *Chew Your Own Heart Out*, and *Fourfold Impaler* are a few examples.

TIAMAT

Much as Tiamat would like to put mighty battle-wagons with roosting spots for many dragons into the sky, her magic seems limited to creating fairly small stealth craft. Tiamat’s dominion ships have one marked advantage: They have magic foci that amplify the breath weapons of dragons that are onboard.

Advantage: During each turn, one dragon onboard can double the range and area of its breath weapon.

Typical Names: Ships are named after dragons that win Tiamat’s favor. A ship is never named after Tiamat herself, since ships are occasionally lost.

ZEHIR

Like Tiamat, Zehir has ships that are somewhat smaller than he would like. Zehir’s craft are quick and maneuverable, even for their small size.

Advantage: The craft gains speed +2 when at least one crew member spends an action to sail it. In addition, once per day, the craft can regain 25 percent of its hit points when one of its own exalted crew members is ritually sacrificed upon it.

Typical Names: *Fang of Shadow*, *High Poison*, *Rendered Sacrifice*, *Slither*.

NAVIGATING THE ASTRAL SEA

The stuff of the Astral Sea is to some extent amenable to the willpower of those traversing it. A navigator can fix a firm idea in mind of any destination that is at least as big as a dominion and head in the direction that seems right. Eventually the traveler will get there, though the route might not be swift, safe, or optimal. Therefore, in games that don’t use dramatic tension caused by faulty navigation attempts or the exhilaration of spot-on-navigation, run navigation through the astral realm as a combination of presumed navigational skill and DM fiat. On the other hand, if you want a quick and dirty navigation system to provide player characters with some control over their course, here is one option.

FREE SAILING

Point-to-point navigation without using a color strand takes time. Sailing through the entire Astral Sea is best reserved for travel to astral motes and citadels that don’t have color strands, or for unobtrusive approaches to avoid riding a color strand that enemies might be monitoring. Of course, it’s also what characters will fall back on when they can’t find the proper color strand.

POINT-TO-POINT ASTRAL NAVIGATION

Destination	Best Option	Secondary Options	Time with Success	Time with Failure
Active Divine Dominion	Religion (easy), Nature (easy)	Arcana (moderate), History (moderate), Perception (hard)	1d4 days	2d3 days
Ruined Dominion	Arcana (moderate), Nature (moderate)	History (hard), Religion (hard)	1d6 days	3d4 days
Familiar Astral Mote	Arcana (moderate), Nature (moderate)	History (hard)	1d6 days	1d10 days
Mapped Astral Mote	Nature (hard)	Arcana (hard), History (hard)	2d4 days	4d4 days
Rumored Astral Mote	Nature (hard)	Arcana (hard), History (hard)	2d6 days	2d6 days, and location isn't found

The accompanying table assumes that the characters are traveling on a skiff of average speed or flying at average speed and are starting from one of the divine dominions rather than the far astral. Use the skill of the character that is navigating. Add a day of travel time if the characters use one of the secondary options. If the characters are in a notably quick or slow vessel, subtract or add one or two days of travel time per travel time die, with a minimum of one day per die. Reduce days from the trip if the navigating character rolls a natural 20.

USING COLOR STRANDS

Traveling on color strands is the quickest way to reach a dominion's environs. Most color strands deposit a vessel a couple of hours or half a day from the central dominion.

The number of color strands in the vicinity of a dominion or mote varies, because color strands fade in and out of existence. Generally, 1d3 -1 color strands can be found in the vicinity of an active divine dominion and 1d2 -1 color strands around a shattered dominion. It takes 1d6 hours to find a new color strand (if there's one to be found).

You can roll on the color strand table below to determine which color strands might be in the area, then the characters can decide how long they spend sailing around the area searching for the strand they want. If they find it, they can sail straight in. If they

can't find it and don't want to use one of the other found strands, they'll have to take the long way.

While traveling along the astral horizon, there is a 50% chance of encountering a color strand each day.

To determine which color strand has been located, roll a d20 and consult the table below. There can be more than one of the same color strand in an area. The first time a color strand is seen from an active dominion, it might look like a series of quick flashes: iconic images from the dominion. The color strands from shattered dominions are just colored light with no images or texture.

COLOR STRANDS

d20	Dominion and Color
1-2	Arvandor—a dark green strand with flickering glimpses of trees and rushing water
3	Carceri—a deep rust-red strand
4-5	Celestia—a brilliant gold strand with glimpses of mountains
6-7	Chernoggar—a red-orange strand with fleeting shadows of marching troops
8-9	Hestavar—a beautiful sapphire strand with glimpses of high towers
10	Kalandurren—a pale gray strand
11-13	The Nine Hells—a swirling ruby red strand with glimpses of the globe of Baator; sometimes it's embellished with horns or grinning mouths
14	Pandemonium—a magenta strand
15	Pluton—an iron gray strand
16	Shom—a pale blue strand
17-18	Tytherion—an indigo strand with a fleeting impression of flowing scales
19	"Gambler Strand"—a strand that flickers with all colors that leads to a random destination in the Astral Sea, possibly nowhere near a dominion
20	Planar—a multicolored strand that leads to a different plane entirely, determined by you, or randomly at your option. Silver strands lead to the natural world, emerald green strands lead to the Feywild, black strands lead to the Shadowfell, mottled opal strands lead to the Elemental Chaos, and swirling dark purple strands lead to the Abyss

GAMBLER STRANDS AND THE GITHYANKI

Veteran captains know that finding a gambler strand substantially increases the likelihood that there are githyanki in the area. The githyanki seek out gambler strands, using them as escape routes when they can't outfight or outsail pursuers. The githyanki have little fear of ending up in a random location in the Astral Sea. They trust their skills, and their connection to Tu'narath (pages 94 and 96) helps them quickly orient their ships. Nongithyanki might feel less confident about plunging into a gambler strand and will be more reluctant to enter one.

ADVENTURES ON THE ASTRAL SEA

The eerie tranquility of astral travel is often shattered by eruptions of sudden danger. Characters aboard skiffs or other conveyances could face magical storms, arcane anomalies, hostile ships, or hungry free-flying creatures, such as astral dreadnoughts. Depending on the game's pace, such a moment of navigational menace can be resolved with a single skill check, as a skill challenge, or as an extended combat or action set piece.

GENERAL SHIPBOARD ACTIONS

The following skills can be applied to nearly any shipboard emergency.

- ♦ **Acrobatics:** Perform stunts requiring precarious climbing up, down, or through the ship's masts and rigging. Tumble through falling obstacles to secure a critical piece of equipment knocked loose in the struggle.
- ♦ **Athletics:** Momentarily hold stressed or breaking ship pieces in place. Man the ship's helm, executing audacious maneuvers or steering the vessel in the face of great resistance.
- ♦ **Arcana:** Pour additional magical fuel into the engines, momentarily (and dangerously) increasing the vessel's speed or maneuverability (to compensate for missing crew members, for instance).
- ♦ **Endurance:** Perform tasks while battered and nearly destroyed; survive with minimal food and water after supplies are lost or stolen.
- ♦ **History:** Identify oncoming vessels by size and configuration, naming the origin and likely intentions of their crews.
- ♦ **Perception:** Spot trouble before it starts, determine the weak point in an enemy's hull, or see a creature's vulnerability.

INTERACTIONS WITH RIVAL CREWS

Battles between ships can play out as distant exchanges of ranged attacks, or as boarding actions. In either case, add drama to ship combat sequences through interaction with enemy crews before hostilities commence.

- ♦ **Bluff:** Fool target crews into believing you're an ally, acting at an unexpected moment to obtain surprise.
- ♦ **Diplomacy:** Persuade pirates, slavers, and other predators to select an easier or richer target; determine what bribes are needed to secure escape if things go sour.
- ♦ **Intimidate:** Persuade potential attackers that you'll hurt them more than they'll hurt you.

- ♦ **Insight:** Identify crews planning to attack you while they pose as friendly or helpless travelers; make an important mental connection about an enemy's ship or tactics.

CHASE

When the crew of one vessel tries to engage and the other tries to escape, a chase ensues. If you know that a fight will ensue when one vessel catches up to the other, resolve the chase as a single Athletics check by the character at the helm. In instances when the conclusion of the chase won't necessarily lead to ship combat, run the chase sequence as a skill challenge of its own.

- ♦ **Arcana:** Spot astral eddies to gain increased speed; locate nebulae or other astral bodies to hide behind; find portals allowing magical teleport to another sector of the sea.
- ♦ **Nature:** Spot or avoid schools of astral creatures that impede navigation.
- ♦ **Stealth:** Plot a confusing course while fleeing; identify a confusing course laid in by a fleeing vessel.

DISABLE OR DESTROY ENEMY VESSELS

In some ship combats, the object of the skill challenge is to disable or destroy the enemy vessel. On the Astral Sea, destruction of a ship is less disastrous than on an ocean in the world. Crews and passengers are left slowly floating in astral space and need not fear drowning or exposure-related injury. On the other hand, without a fast ship, they become easy targets for predators.

- ♦ **Arcana:** Use onboard magical weaponry (if available) to modify arcane ranged and area attacks to damage ships from a distance. This check allows subsequent uses of the attack powers themselves. Expending a daily arcane power grants a +5 bonus to the attack roll.
- ♦ **Religion:** As above, but using divine attacks.
- ♦ **Weapon Attack:** Use onboard mechanical weapons such as harpoons and ballistae to damage the enemy vessel.

Depending on how open you are to collaborative description, you might let players specify how their ships are equipped with long-range weapons and where those weapons are located on the vessel. There should be enough weapons and other important mechanisms (such as steering) for each character to act in a given round. Alternatively, you could treat the acquisition of these weapons as a story obstacle of its own.

CONQUERING ENEMY VESSELS

In a skill challenge to board and overrun an enemy vessel, the characters contend for the opportunity to stage a fight on the enemy crew's deck. If they lose, the targets successfully disengage before a fight can occur. Alternatively, a lost challenge could result in the fight occurring on the characters' ship. Victorious invaders not only defeat their opponents, but can then seize control of the vessel.

- ◆ **Acrobatics:** Use a piece of loose rigging to swing onto the target deck.
- ◆ **Intimidate:** Frighten crew members into backing away or otherwise ceding ground.
- ◆ **Stealth:** Sneak aboard from a different direction to achieve surprise.

Allow movement attacks and racial powers to substitute for skills as the logic of the scene permits. For movement powers such as *fey step*, where no skill modifier pertains, ask for an Arcana check to determine if the character's "aim" is correct, or treat the use of the power as an automatic success.

REPULSING BOARDING ATTEMPTS

In the reverse of the above scene, the characters are trying to repulse would-be boarders and avoid a fight on the deck of their own ship. Depending on how they describe their intent, success indicates that they avoid the fight and also evade pursuit, or allows them to conduct the fight on the enemy ship.

- ◆ **Bluff:** Lure an invader into making a false step or into an improvised trap.
- ◆ **Intimidate:** Scare off the invaders.
- ◆ **Stealth:** Surprise an invader attempting to move between vessels, shoving it overboard.

In addition to these boarding-specific actions, other player characters might be undertaking actions inspired by the "General" and "Chase" sections, above.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Characters traveling the Astral Sea can face dangers beyond those presented by raiders, pirates, and creatures roaming the astral domain. Environmental factors can come into play as well.

STORMS, WHIRLPOOLS, AND OTHER ANOMALIES

Boiling with the unresolved magic of creation and powerful residual magic from the Dawn War, the unpredictable Astral Sea continually generates arcane storms to bedevil the unwary traveler. Storms move fast, tending to sweep through an area

and move on. Less commonly, they spontaneously dissipate on the spot, leaving a ship eerily becalmed.

Other astral hazards are stationary and permanent. The most common of these is the whirlpool, a swirling vortex of energy that draws objects inexorably to its center to be battered by the force of astral space as it folds in on itself.

Astral navigators refer to other permanent astral hazards as anomalies. Most anomalies move slowly through the Astral Sea, with a third of them staying in the same place for months or years before drifting again. Movement patterns might follow a predictable geometric course or flow arbitrarily, buffeted by astral currents. Many anomalies indirectly owe their existence to the activities of the gods, whether recently or deep in the mythic past. A relative few anomalies are intentional creations of the deities or their ranking servitors, though most arise as a ripple effect from the marshaling of massive divine or primordial energy.

Whatever their effects, the checks used in challenges to avoid these various hazards remain the same.

- ◆ **Arcana:** Employ the vessel's magical instruments to detect oncoming hazards.
- ◆ **Endurance:** Physically shield an ally from harmful or disorienting energy, bearing the brunt of the damage and shrugging off the injury.
- ◆ **History:** Recall the location of anomalies to be avoided.
- ◆ **Nature:** Predict oncoming weather conditions through observing the astral eddies and the behavior of astral wildlife.
- ◆ **Religion:** Sense divine energy indicating the immediate presence or past activities of deities and their champions. Identify mythic ruins floating in the Astral Sea since the catastrophic events of the Dawn War.

With a successful skill challenge, the vessel avoids or effectively minimizes the ill effects of a storm, whirlpool, or anomaly. On a failure, the characters suffer the results associated with the hazard.

SPECIFIC ASTRAL SEA HAZARDS

The hazardous terrain types described below are but a few of the possibilities encountered in the Astral Sea.

BRAINSWELL NEBULA

These gigantic cloud formations resembling a diseased and pulsing brain are often encountered in githyanki-controlled sectors of the Astral Sea.

Effect: When a creature uses a daily power or a random recharge power within a brainswell nebula, it takes 10 psychic damage per tier.

Usage: Add a brainswell nebula to a difficult encounter with githyanki pirates that understand the danger of the nebula and change their tactics accordingly.

CHAINSTORM

These phantasmal, shrieking chains are thought to be the echoes of an imprisoned deity's rage manifesting in the Astral Sea. Typically, chainstorms take up large areas (at least 10 by 10 squares) and can last a few minutes, days, or even weeks.

Effect: When a creature scores a critical hit or uses an action point while within a chainstorm, the spectral chains physically manifest and wrap themselves around the triggering creature, restraining it (save ends).

Usage: Chainstorms are a useful way to slow down mobile characters and work well when combined with creatures that can take advantage of immobilized enemies, combat advantage, or both.

DEVOURING CLOUD

This anomaly takes the form of a chittering cloud of bright-red astral beetles. The sages of Kerith-Ald (*Manual of the Planes*, page 95) believe this blight was created and unleashed into the Astral Sea by Kyuss, the Spawner of Corruption, to further his ultimate goal of true apotheosis. Devouring clouds often manifest as small wisps of about 10 contiguous squares, but they can swarm into areas hundreds of feet across.

Effect: Devouring clouds are difficult terrain that affects both overland movement and flight. When a creature is bloodied or takes ongoing damage while within a devouring cloud, the cloud's astral beetles go into a frenzy, and the triggering creature and each creature within 2 squares of it take 5 damage per tier.

Usage: Use a devouring cloud as a replacement for a controller to divide a group of characters who are fighting brutes and soldiers.

MASK OF ZORTHOS

This Gargantuan phantasmal clay mask, believed to be the hollowed-out head of Zorthos, the slain god of doubt and lassitude, spins endlessly through the Astral Sea.

Effect: When a creature touches the mask, or ends its turn in a space adjacent to the mask, it suffers the following effect until it reaches three milestones or until the effect is negated with a Remove Affliction ritual or similar effect.

Whenever the triggering creature saves against an effect that includes a dazing or stunning effect, it takes 10 psychic damage per tier.

Usage: This strange artifact could be used as a surface on which an encounter takes place. Astral marauders that have the power to daze or stun enemies would take full advantage of its effect.

PSYCHIC STORM

Psychic storms darken the astral clouds and reach the size of earthly hurricanes. To escape one, those traveling in the Astral Sea must outrun the storm's leading edge as it sweeps through a sector of astral space.

Effect: When the escape attempt fails, the cloud either pushes the vessel or creature through a nearby color veil or leaves it in the storm's area of effect. In the latter case, when a creature starts its turn while within a psychic storm, it is dazed until the end of its next turn. In addition, psychic attacks made within a psychic storm gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll and deal half damage.

Usage: A psychic storm is a good way to introduce a skill challenge. Failure can lead either to travel to an unwanted location, or an encounter with creatures hiding inside the clouds.

SEHIL'S GUTS

Legend suggests that this Huge phantasmal knot of blood-red tubes is the remains of the intestines of Sehil, a primordial that Kord slew barehanded during the Dawn War's final battle.

Effect: When a creature comes into contact with or ends its turn adjacent to Sehil's guts, it suffers the following effect until it reaches three milestones or until the effect is negated with a Remove Affliction ritual or similar effect.

When the triggering creature becomes bloodied, it and each of its allies within 3 squares of it grant combat advantage (save ends).

Usage: Use Sehil's guts as a fitting set piece in an encounter with aberrations or abominations that benefit from enemies that are granting them combat advantage.

NIHILATH SHROUD

This roiling wave of gray ectoplasmic matter continually sprouts tentacles, which pull and tear at each other and are then reabsorbed into the larger mass. The Nihilath shroud is a creation loosed into the Astral Sea by the ancient illithid empire of Nihilath (see *Underdark*, page 82). A shroud is usually a Huge piece of mobile terrain; some shrouds move randomly, while others seem to follow and hunt githyanki and githzerai travelers.

Effect: When a creature starts its turn in a square of Nihilath shroud, it is slowed until the end of its next turn or until it hits a githyanki or githzerai with an attack. In addition, any creature that ends its turn within a Nihilath shroud loses a healing surge.

Usage: Since it was designed by the illithids, a Nihilath shroud works well in an encounter with mind flayers, because the slow effect makes it harder for foes to avoid their attacks.

DIVINE DOMINIONS

THIS CHAPTER goes deeper into each of the functioning divine dominions, from the bright but dangerous Hunting Lands of Arvandor to the murderous tunnels and plateaus of Tytherion.

The dominion write-ups are accompanied by detailed treatment of each dominion's associated archipelago, which are the border islands that are home to most of the outsiders and mortals who live in the Astral Sea.

This chapter includes basic information about the gods and their servants, as well as the astral dominions and their border islands, and the challenges of adventuring there.

- ◆ **The World of the Gods:** Basic background information on the gods, angels, exalted, and outsiders of the dominions and border islands.
- ◆ **Arvandor:** A look at the convoluted mythic history of Corellon and Sehanine, and the present "heaven" of Arvandor, a beautiful land in which the Glorious Hunt is a religious duty and a practical necessity.
- ◆ **Celestia:** Details of the current purposes of each of Celestia's three gods and the Game of Mountains, which brings their followers together for war games that keep the dominion prepared for battle.
- ◆ **Chernoggar:** A dominion rocked by war between Bane and Gruumsh with multiple battlefields. It includes a skill challenge for characters wanting to cross those battlefields.
- ◆ **Hestavar:** Erathis's great mission to reconstruct heaven, the Game of Making's role in that mission, and the complementary agendas of Pelor and Ioun.
- ◆ **The Nine Hells:** Information on the realm of the damned, including Avernus and the River Styx, as well as an examination of devils' motives as plot hooks, including a six-page adventure that takes place on the surface of Avernus.
- ◆ **Tytherion:** Separate treatments of the nightmarish realms of Tiamat's Azharul and Zehir's Samaragd.



Each of the divine dominions detailed in this chapter is the home of one or more deities, countless angels and other divine servitors such as exarchs, and the embodied soulforms of mortal worshipers known as exalted enjoying an afterlife in the presence of their god.

An archipelago of between a dozen and two hundred smaller islands surrounds each functioning dominion. The border islands rise from the substance of the Astral Sea, apparently as a consequence of the leftover magic of the Lattice of Heaven. The border islands share many characteristics with the dominion that spawned them. Most of the inhabitants of the border islands are outsiders, the soulform beings who would have become exalted if the Lattice of Heaven had not been destroyed during the Dawn War. Mortals, unable to survive for long within the divine dominions, live among the outsiders in the border isles.

The following brief descriptions discuss the gods, angels, exalted, and outsiders who populate these realms.

THE GODS

Even the gods who hate each other the most (Bahamut and Tiamat, Avandra and Zehir, Moradin and Asmodeus) seldom launch direct attacks against each other. No matter how much they might hate each other, the gods fought on the same side to survive the Dawn War while a great number of other deities were destroyed.

The primordials have been beaten down, but they are still a threat. Evil gods who ultimately intend to pin all the other gods and the world below beneath their heel are conscious of the fact that as the cosmos is presently balanced, their moment of victory would pass too quickly, replaced by eternal despair as they were themselves crushed by the resurgent primordials. The good and unaligned gods are likewise conscious of the fact that the full might of all the gods is what contains the primordials, no matter how much one god might want to permanently eliminate or maim a hated rival. The god slain today could be the god who was destined to be your savior in the next war against the primordials or the Far Realm.

As gods of chaos, Lolth and Tharizdun have demonstrated that they might side with the primordials in a new war. Gruumsh is chaotic and unreliable, but odds are that he would fight against chaos and the primordials more often than against the gods, much as he did in the Dawn War.

EXARCHS

The gods' exarchs vary greatly in power, background, and life span. Unlike the gods' other servants, the angels, each of the exarchs took an individual path to power that led them to share their gods' secrets. The exarchs' widely varying levels, powers, and capabilities make them an invaluable tool at high paragon levels and the epic tier. You might not want to turn your campaign into an all-out war with Gruumsh, but any group of player characters could have an escalating conflict with Baghtru and Vaprak, Gruumsh's exarchs.

Each exarch is unique, but it's a safe assumption that a deity who has two or three exarchs could have another two or three that the characters don't know about yet, so campaigns hinging on high-powered conflict in the Plane Above can easily introduce new exarchs as needed.

The characters' choices of epic destinies could in fact demand such interactions. Demigods, Chosen, and many other epic destinies flow easily into roles as exarchs-at-large for the deities the characters have become familiar with during their rise in power.

Some exarchs spend a lot of time in their god's dominion. Others roam the wider world. Like their god, most exarchs are uncomfortable on the border islands, but being an exarch means having a willingness to handle unpleasant tasks, which allows the god they serve to focus on the important tasks.

ANGELS

Angels are made from the same material of creation as the gods and were created as part of the original compact of heaven in which the gods agreed to share power in the natural world. The gods also share angels. The vast majority of angels are nameless servitors that pride themselves on having little personality so they can flow smoothly into the service of any god who calls them. The angels' mission is to perform the will of the deities, one god at a time, not to cling to a single god and promote its cause above those of all other deities.

For this reason, gods often want to have other servitors than angels. Angels can be trusted equally to give their all in service of any one of the gods, so each god looks for an edge: servants who are loyal only to him or her personally.

There are, of course, exceptions to the standard angelic behavior. Some angels find that they seem suited only for service to a single deity, adapting elements of the deity's ornamentation and symbolism into neutral angelic dress. A few angels develop strong personalities and choose names. Sometimes

these angels go on to become exarchs, while at other times they carve bizarre paths in the Astral Sea before they disappear, are destroyed, or fade from existence.

DUTY AND CONSTRAINT

Angels serve the gods. Gods sometimes fight each other. Therefore, angels sometimes fight angels. Even so, angels cannot be persuaded to lend their energy to certain rituals or sacrifices that would imperil the deities or eliminate a great number of rival angels. They are willing to fight each other one or a dozen at a time, if that is what a god or a character wielding divine power commands, but they will not willingly destroy planar gates, shatter dominions, or slay deities as the primordials did in the Dawn War. Angels commanded to slay deities or exarchs destroy themselves before they can succeed.

Several of the evil deities are difficult for angels to serve with their customary efficiency and dedication. The problem is not evil alignment: Angels have no problem serving Bane, Tiamat, and Zehir, for instance, who are evil but have goals, methods, and magical environments that do not conflict with the original compact of heaven. The following gods, however, pose some problems.

Asmodeus: As a deity who is often at odds with the other gods, Asmodeus employs his devils for most of the tasks that angels perform for other deities. Still, it pleases the Lord of the Nine to have seven or a dozen angels near him, to be brought out when others need a subtle reminder that he is a full god. The angels that serve Asmodeus almost never fall into his control.

Gruumsh: The original compact of heaven did not include chaos. By embracing chaos, Gruumsh lost some of his ability to command angels. He occasionally employs angels in the world, and does so even less often in the astral realm. When he gets a good

THE ANGEL TRAILS

A golden road of sunlight opens in a high arc above the silver sea, thousands of miles above the horizon line where astral captains usually choose to sail. Testament to the angels' still existing connections to the original divine lattice, the Angel Trails are temporary roads between the dominions. Most arcs last for a day or three (at most a week) as angels of two dominions trade positions, information, and tasks, flowing back and forth along the trail almost too quickly to be perceived. The trails don't appear to work for any creatures other than angels. It seems likely that if the gods wished, the trails could be used to quickly transfer angels from one dominion to the other to respond to a renewed threat from the primordials.



batch of angels, he likes to send them against Bane's angels to see what will happen.

Lolth: Lolth has broken her connections to the compact of heaven too systematically to enforce angelic obedience. Given that she lives in the Elemental Chaos and that her chosen people live in the primordials' Underdark, angels are seldom called into Lolth's service. When individual angels are summoned by Lolth's priests, they can expect to be sacrificed to a demon, set to guarding a door that cannot be trusted to a creature of darkness, or simply thrown into combat.

Tharizdun: An angel that finds itself working for Tharizdun is the victim of magic that has nothing to do with angelic duty.

Torog: Torog is locked in the Underdark and surrounded by miles of rock in what is effectively an alien creation. The few angels that work for Torog in the Underdark do not operate in comfort, and

their losses are not quickly replaced. Torog prefers to use servitors of his own creation in the Underdark, employing the angels that are due to him as his agents in the world and in the Astral Sea.

EXALTED

Exalted are soulforms—physical beings created from the souls of newly deceased mortals. Only a few of the mortals who are fervent worshipers of their deity become exalted. Many other mortal souls spiral out of the Shadowfell and past the dominions of the gods into unknown fates or are born again in new bodies with no memory of their previous incarnation. Other mortal souls might remain in the world among the primal spirits as ancestor spirits or guardians.

All Races, All Shapes: There are no racial or type-based restrictions on which intelligent worshipers become exalted. Dragons frequently become exalted, magical beasts sometimes become exalted,

and even an occasional aberrant that has served a deity well slips into the dominions. Krag-Ik Eight Eye, the infamous beholder exalted of Kord, is probably the most sensational example, but realms such as Tytherion and Chernoggar are home to as many diverse forms of exalted as there are forms in the world.

The Afterlife Isn't Forever: Exalted don't actually live forever. In the current damaged state of the divine dominions, exalted can expect to live for centuries or occasionally dozens of centuries.

Exalted who die violent deaths while within their god's dominion generally come back to life within 24 hours having all their memories. Exalted who die within an allied god's dominion might benefit from such resurrection, but not always. Exalted who die in enemy dominions or elsewhere in the silver sea just die. As soulforms, exalted



cannot be affected by normal resurrection powers; they are resurrected only by the dominion magic of their deity or not at all.

Toward the end of a soulform's "lifetime," the exalted often understands that it is about to pass on. Some go on final pilgrimages to the rest of the dominions, often requiring characters as bodyguards to ensure that they aren't eliminated during the pilgrimage. Other exalted start aging and die, as if from old age. Still others gratefully add their souls to the fabric of the dominion in elaborate rituals.

Soulforms Stay in the Astral Sea: Exalted (and outsiders) who venture into the world, the other planes, or even Sigil, can expect at most a month of existence before the divine magic that binds them within their soulforms disintegrates. Within the Astral Sea, exalted can go where they like or where they are forced to go, without fear of dissolution.

No Children: When mortal children become exalted, they age normally to maturity, then stop aging. But neither exalted nor outsiders breed or bear children. Mortals in the astral realm can have children normally, but not with exalted partners.

Lustrous: There is a sort of glow or dark sheen to exalted that other creatures don't have. Unless an exalted being disguises its slightly too bright or crisp-edged soulform using magic or subterfuge, anyone within 20 feet can usually tell that the creature is exalted. Outsiders lack this sheen and sometimes refer to the exalted as "shinies."

THEMES FOR EXALTED

Nearly any creature could be an exalted of one of the deities. Ordinarily you should use creatures that match expectations for the deity involved, saving exceptions for dramatic or pivotal moments in the campaign. The game statistics for exalted are usually the same as the statistics of normal creatures. If you wish, you can also use tools such as the monster themes found in Chapter 4 or in *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* to give some exalted (and outsiders) powers that correspond to their deity.

Corellon and Sehanine: Use the Feywild Denizen theme (*Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, page 108).

Erathis: A monster theme for creatures devoted to Erathis appears on page 140.

Kord: A monster theme for creatures devoted to Kord appears on page 141.

Nine Hells: Use the monster theme for the Legion of Avernus (*Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, page 112).

Tiamat: The powers of Tiamat's Red Hand cultists (*Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, page 122) work well for exalted of Tiamat.

Zehir: The Snaketongue Cultist theme (*Dungeon Master's Guide 2*, page 118) can also apply to exalted of Zehir.

OUTSIDERS

If the Plane Above functioned properly, the soulforms that end up as outsiders would be exalted, rising as newly incarnate beings inside their gods' dominion instead of on a border island or in a random location in the Astral Sea. Most rise on border islands outside the dominion they should have been part of, but others are shuffled into other archipelagoes—the characters won't always be able to judge an outsider's history by the individual's current location. Outsiders enter the astral realm anywhere between two and five times as often as exalted, depending on what you want in your campaign.

No Reason, No Rhyme: Exalted often suspect that outsiders are subtly flawed. The exalted of evil gods such as Tiamat and Zehir are certain that outsiders are entirely inferior. Unless you decide to change the dynamic in your campaign, that assumption shouldn't actually be true. The tragedy of the dominions is that there isn't any true difference between souls that become exalted and souls that find themselves as outsiders; the outsiders are the final accidental casualties of the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven during the Dawn War.

No Entry: Outsiders waking from death within sight of their god's dominion don't understand that something has gone wrong. Sometimes other outsiders, exalted, or mortals will be on hand to advise them, but most don't believe that they could be exiled from their gods' dominion when they can see it glowing on the horizon and will try to swim toward it. Assuming they make it through the miles that separate them from the color veil around their god's dominion without being eaten by a monster or picked up by sympathetic travelers in a skiff, they're in for a horrible disappointment. Outsiders are incapable of entering the active dominion of any deity. Those who attempt to cross the color veil of a functioning divine dominion either press up against the veil as if it were an impassable wall or are instantly teleported between two and twenty miles above or below the dominion, where they might be attacked by predators that know to hunt in those zones.

There is one unfortunate exception to the rule that outsiders can't enter divine dominions: Asmodeus built his dominion to take advantage of the disorder of the heavens. Outsiders can enter the Nine Hells. And many do.

Outsiders Are Purely Mortal: Outsiders do not age, unless they came into the astral realm as children. Unlike exalted, they get only one new life. Only the most powerful magic can resurrect a dead outsider—in a sense, outsiders are more mortal than mortals. Once they have been removed from their soulforms, they are really and truly gone to whatever their soul's next destination will be. If one manages to avoid violent death and soul-draining madness, an

outsider can exist between 50 and 100 years in its new form.

Outsider Morale: Responses to the curse of being a near-exalted vary widely depending on personality, god, contact with other outsiders or exalted, and the culture of the local border islands. Rage and despair are common reactions. Most get over it and decide that another 50 to 100 years of existence is good, even in exile from their god. Others treat their exile as a curse and see their former life as a regrettable mistake.

Outsider Culture: The majority of the inhabitants of each border archipelago are outsiders devoted to one of that dominion's deities. Former devotees of good or unaligned gods either live as well as they can in the shadow of their gods' dominions or travel by ship, portal, or flight to a new home in the astral realm. Outsiders of some of the evil gods, notably Tiamat and Zehir, would be better off if they fled their gods' archipelagoes, while Bane and Gruumsh's outsiders often find themselves drawn into their gods' expanding conflict.

Members of cultures and communities heavily influenced by outsiders are generally more sarcastic and self-mocking than similar populations not influenced by outsiders. Even outsiders who remain steadfast worshipers of their god are likely to acknowledge the irony of their position.

A Third Chance: It is rare, but not unheard of, for an outsider that has lived well to die and wake again within the Astral Sea, this time inside the appropriate god's dominion. It is much more rare for an outsider to choose a new deity, devote itself to a new cause, and become an exalted of a different god.

DOMINIONS AND BORDER ISLANDS

Despite proximity and a common wellspring of divine power, the dominions and their border islands operate like separate worlds with entirely different magical environments.

Freedom of the Dominions: Servants of the deities such as exarchs, angels, and exalted can move freely through each other's dominions without a problem—nothing prevents an exalted of Zehir from entering Celestia and staying indefinitely, except for the displeasure of the inhabitants of Celestia, and the fact that an exalted who is slain outside his or her home dominion can't be resurrected.

Mortals Can't Stay in Heaven: Unlike outsiders, player characters and normal mortals can enter dominions freely. But unlike the exalted, mortals who enter the gods' dominions are capable of staying for only a short time, usually between two weeks and two months. Epic tier characters can withstand the pressure of the dominion for as long as a year. When a mortal stays too long within an active divine

dominion, the all-powerful will of one of the dominion's deities reshapes the mortal's personality, giving it traits and goals that are more in line with the god's personality. The transformation is temporary if the mortal leaves. If the mortal stays, the transformation becomes permanent and the mortal is transformed into a minor aspect of the god, burning out a short time later.

The exception to this is in the Nine Hells, where mortals are welcome to survive as long as they can endure the pain.

Islands of the Broken Lattice: It's not impossible for the gods and their strongest servants to visit the border islands. It's just not comfortable. The aftershocks of the broken Lattice of Heaven weaken beings of pure spirit while they're on the border islands. Gods, aspects, angels, and exarchs take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses while in the border islands. For this reason, among others, a deity will rarely travel to a border island.

Exalted on the Border Islands: Exalted are not discomfited by the border islands. A few exalted even choose to live in the islands around their gods' dominion. They lose their dominion's promise of resurrection, gaining in return a bit of freedom or the sense that they are helping others who might have deserved a better afterlife than they got.

There's also a concrete reason that some exalted choose to live in the border islands. If enough exalted live long lives and die eventual natural deaths on a border island while performing rituals devoted to their deity, it is possible for a god's dominion to expand and absorb the border island into the dominion. Given the time required for the transformation, and the fact that outsiders on the island cannot be taken along, exalted attempting this transformation generally choose one border island at a time, succeeding every four to eight centuries at slightly expanding their god's power.

ASTRAL DIAMONDS

Astral diamonds are clear, faceted crystals that glow with a faint silvery light. Each astral diamond is worth 10,000 gp. Astral diamonds appear naturally in dominions and shards across the Astral Sea and are thought by some to be side effects of the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven. They are regularly found and mined in Celestia and Hestavar, being less common (and found in smaller mines) in other dominions, the shattered dominions, and the border islands.

In the world of mortals, sages and poets speak rapturously of the eternal glories of Arvandor, the fragrant breezes of its flower- and tree-strewn wilderness, and the endless revelries of the Court of the Seldarine.

The skalds and sages who prattle on about these glories are usually neither elves nor eladrin, and not even well-informed worshipers of Corellon and Sehanine. Perfect beauty and unceasing leisure are human ideas of heaven. Those who fully understand Corellon and Sehanine, the original gods of the Feywild, know that their heaven couldn't be that simple.

It's true that the gods of Arvandor have created an amazing realm: a place of awesome beauty and heart-stopping rapture fit for powerful gods of love, beauty, arcane magic, the wilderness, and freedom. It's also a place fraught with constant danger, wild battle, and the call for valor. Unlike the sheltered aesthetes of the mortal world, Corellon understands that beauty means more when it must be protected from horror, and unlike foolish romantics, Sehanine understands that love means more when it's hard earned and bears the risk of loss.

Three great events shaped the realm of Arvandor and the destinies of all who come to dwell within it: the destruction of the original fey pantheon, Sehanine and Corellon's subsequent emergence as universal gods instead of being gods only for the fey, and the pair's leadership in the dissent against the Carceri Compact (page 104) that created the prison of the gods. The Arvandor that has been reshaped in the wake of these events is a deeper world that is a testament to the manner in which some gods have reinvented themselves in the shattered heavens after the tragedies of the Dawn War.

TRIUNE HARMONY LOST

Before the Dawn War began, Corellon and Sehanine spent their time beside their sister-god Lolth; the three deities headed the fey pantheon, and their power was unchallenged. Sehanine was wise and as changeable as the shifting moon, Lolth was quick and as unflinching as fallen night, and Corellon shone like the stars. He created the mortal fey from his tears of sorrow, beauty, and mirth—all qualities that the fey love. Most of his tears were those of laughter, whether brought on by an arcing leap performed by Sehanine or by a cutting jest offered by Lolth.

Together the three gods shared a life to which most gods (much less mortals) can only aspire, in which acts of compassion and trust alternated with those of power and splendor. Sometimes the laughter was dark and mocking, but more often it was heartfelt and true. Insofar as was possible, the chosen people of the three fey deities (a race that would eventually

become the elves, the eladrin, and the drow) followed their gods' example, living in a rapturous dream that balanced control and desire, adventure and harmony.

The fey deities spent little time in the astral dominions before the Dawn War. Insulated in the Feywild, they experienced time differently from how the other gods did, so when the war began, they were slow to react. What the other gods experienced as an invasion and the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven came to the ears of Corellon, Sehanine, and Lolth as mere rumors of violence. The Dawn War was being fought in earnest, but the Feywild still functioned as the timeless echo of a world that had not yet spiraled into chaos. Lolth, however, saw opportunity in the Dawn War that her companion deities did not.

The Astral Sea was changing, and the fey deities' triune harmony was not to last. Even Corellon and Sehanine cannot say whether it was the Dawn War that changed Lolth or if she had always thought differently. Lolth's rebellion is distorted by too many shadows and echoes for anyone to be certain about her earliest act of treachery. Did she consort with demons before she tried to elevate her dark-skinned drow over the other members of the race? Did she try to kill Sehanine first, or Corellon? The best-known version of the story is that Lolth nearly killed Corellon before he realized that her attack was not one of her usual dark jokes. Sehanine intervened and saved Corellon's life, but Lolth escaped.

Whatever its chronology of treachery, Lolth's war upon the Feywild was synchronized with the war in the Astral Sea: The Lattice of Heaven was shattered, the half-constructed dominion of Arvandor (meant as a pleasurable retreat for the three deities of the fey) was ruined, and in the Feywild, Lolth's children—the drow—razed the cities of the eladrin and the shadowed forests around them. Thus, Corellon, Sehanine, and their people fought two wars at once in the era of legend. The war in the Feywild ended when Lolth fled into the earth, taking her drow into the Underdark and out of thought of those who remained on the surface. At the same time, Corellon and Sehanine, as well as Lolth, fought in the Dawn War alongside the rest of the gods out of necessity, and in doing so they transformed themselves into universal deities.

GODS OF ALL RACES

As Corellon and Sehanine fought beside the other gods and came to know them and their mortal people, Sehanine realized that mortals other than their own chosen fey might deserve love and attention. Corellon was slower to see her side, but her earnestness quickly swayed him—that, and the beauty he came to see in the nonfey races. In the middle

of the war, from the vantage point of the Astral Sea, Corellon and Sehanine learned what they could of the other mortals. The universe opened to them like a bloom in spring, and they took mortal form to explore it—not the petal where they had lived (the Feywild), but the mortal world at the center of the flower. They moved quietly among the peoples of the world, wearing aspects that enabled them to pass as eladrin or elf.

And during their wanderings, they found beauty, love, and grace in the other races—perhaps in less refined form than in their own people's, but of no less virtue. Given the taint in their own house—the dark path of betrayal and chaos taken by their beloved Lolth, whose icy beauty stretched over hidden depravity—Corellon and Sehanine were amenable to a certain straightforward lack of refinement.

Some in the world still think of Corellon as an eladrin god and Sehanine as an elven deity, but over the ages, the two deities have deliberately moved to share their power with the nonfey, forging close alliances with gods whose ways they found congenial. Most notably, Sehanine helped Melora create the halflings, either to serve a special role in the Dawn War or as an unintended but welcome consequence of some great event (sages' accounts on this question differ). Regardless of the reason for the halflings' creation, neither deity had time to care for the new race during the fury of the Dawn War, so Avandra adopted the halflings and guided them through the hardest days of their infancy as a race. Through this connection, Avandra, Melora, and Sehanine strengthened their bonds of friendship, and Corellon joined their company easily.

In the aftermath of the Dawn War, when the gods were deciding how the world might be arranged once the fighting was done, Sehanine suggested that the exalted of Avandra and Melora would be welcome in Arvandor; though neither deity wanted a dominion of her own, exalted sworn to the two of them thus could dwell in a dominion when they chose to do so. This agreement strengthened ties not only among all four deities, but also between their respective clergy.

THE GLORIOUS HUNT

The idea of Arvandor as a world of graceful forests, brilliant sunsets, and splendid islands tells only a piece of the story. Rather than living in safety, as do most of the exalted of other dominions, the exalted of Arvandor, known as the ruesti, are aware that they are part of what Corellon and Sehanine refer to as the Glorious Hunt. As such, the ruesti know they can be called on at any time to help track and slay an abomination that is carving a path through the dominion. Exaltation alone, however, doesn't make a mighty warrior or magician, and the ruesti of Arvandor are constantly training their bodies and minds for their sacred duty—and their own safety.

To avoid the same tragedy created in other dominions with the shattering of the Lattice of Heaven as a testament to how far the heavens have fallen, the strange necessity of the Hunt has served a secondary purpose that Corellon and Sehanine wanted in their dominion—danger. Corellon and his exalted aren't satisfied with an endless succession of perfectly happy days—lives without loss. Sehanine cherishes bonds that are formed under pressure—bonds that would never be as strong without the chance of death or worse. Most in Arvandor see the Hunt as a glorious calling and a never-ending quest to preserve the fierce beauty of the realm.

To this end, the Glorious Hunt is a dangerous proposition. A ruesti who dies while on the Hunt can expect to receive only between three and a dozen resurrections inside Arvandor before dying a final death. Additionally, some abominations have soul-rending powers, which are worse than death because they can obliterate victims from the dominion immediately. The ruesti accept these drawbacks as the price of a reward in limited supply: Corellon and Sehanine cannot accept all their followers into Arvandor, and in theory, the constant attrition of ruesti frees up more space for their fellows. Ironically, the afterlife of elves and eladrin—the longest-lived mortal races—is shortest of all the immortal beings.

THE FOUR FREE GODS AND CARCERI

The creation of Carceri, the Red Prison of the Gods, cemented the alliance of the four deities and established why they became known as the free gods. Carceri was originally conceived as a magic laboratory that spawned abominations to help the gods win the war against the primordials, but at the end of the war, the flow of abominations could not be shut off. The gods had to wall off the dominion that had served as their arsenal, so many of them pooled their magic to create a nearly foolproof jail. Some deities, such as Torog and Zehir, would not cooperate until all the gods agreed to respect and enforce the prison of Carceri.

But Sehanine and Avandra objected. They mistrusted the solution, saying that no prison could truly succeed

against the abominations, and that the cosmic prison's negative effect on the Plane Above would be greater than its success in containing the abominations. Corellon and Melora sided with their friends.

Rather than contribute to Carceri's walls, Corellon and Sehanine sacrificed a portion of Arvandor. Corellon used his mastery of arcane magic to create a metaphysical funnel, ensuring that abominations that attempted to escape from the folded space inside Carceri would land inside Arvandor instead of out in the wider Astral Sea. Through this act, it has fallen upon Corellon, Sehanine, Melora, Avandra, and their exalted to hunt down and slay these abominations before they can emerge into the Astral Sea.

The exalted of Melora and Avandra also find purpose in the Glorious Hunt. The roving exalted of Avandra are pampered as honored guests while not on the Hunt, if they so choose. Exalted of Melora frequently live in the Hunting Lands, venturing into the tamer areas of the Court of the Seldarine only once every couple of decades. On occasion, exalted of Kord, Bane, Pelor, and even Zehir have been known to join the Hunt. If slain while on a Hunt, these exalted (not the ruesti of Corellon and Sehanine) are reborn through the normal process within Arvandor or in their home dominions (or in the case of Avandra and Melora, in a random dominion).

Corellon and Sehanine try to protect a few sections of Arvandor from the intrusions of the Glorious Hunt. The island of Estaira (see below) and the Court of the Seldarine, for instance, feature strong magic wards and powerful guardians that protect the ruesti residing within, keeping them in peace and comfort while they await the call for the Hunt. Only twice throughout history have abominations broken through and attacked these protected areas.

THE HUNTING LANDS

The abominations that surge out of the terrible folds emanating from Carceri frequently emerge within the Hunting Lands—swaths of land that Corellon and Sehanine maintain as rugged and untamed wilderness. In truth, Corellon didn't choose the locations of the Hunting Lands; he merely let the wilderness erupt over the areas where infestations of escaped abominations began to take hold. These places, touched by the history of Arvandor, resonate with the power of ages. Below are described four such locations; scores of other similar locales exist within the Hunting Lands.

The Dead City of Carantharas: Among a great stand of trees on a small island near the edge of the dominion are the ruins of an exalted city whose wards fell centuries ago to a concerted abomination attack. Carantharas has been maintained as one of the Hunting Lands instead of being rebuilt.

By day, the island appears deserted, but by night the echoes of the lost ruesti who ruled the place

whisper through the leaves of the trees. Characters who listen to these whispers can make Nature checks in place of Arcana checks or Religion checks to learn about the abominations, exarchs, deities, and history of Arvandor. Those who succeed on a DC 30 Nature check learn the truth of Carantharas: It once bounded a portal from Carceri that burst open and allowed the city to be overrun, before a party of great heroes sealed it at the cost of their own lives. The portal possibly still exists in the catacombs below.

In recent years, abominations in the ruins repeatedly have escaped or overwhelmed hunting parties. Nullifiers (page 132) have chosen the city's catacombs as a lair, instead of attempting to break out of Arvandor entirely. After a number of unsuccessful Hunts in Carantharas, the ruesti now have begun actively recruiting planar adventurers to investigate the ruins.

The Endless Forest: Outside the eladrin cities, great swaths of eternally virgin woodland swarm with monsters, abominations, and traditional game, grown far more powerful than such creatures in the mortal world. Chief among such places in the Hunting Lands is the Endless Forest, a weaving maze of trees, boulders, and streams. Mortal elves and ruesti alike hunt along the forest's winding paths, whispering soft prayers to Sehanine over game felled by arrow or spear. Active moongates (*Manual of the Planes*, page 90) and Carceri funnel points, whose specific locations are unknown, keep the forest well stocked with terrors. Escape from the Endless Forest into Estaira or the Court is impossible without luck or the blessings of the Seldarine, who favor those that have defeated various foes beneath the forest's boughs.

The Reef Catacombs: Frequently, the Glorious Hunt travels to a chain of tiny, boulderlike islands off the coast of Estaira where abominations from Carceri have lodged with increasing frequency. In reality, these islands are the tops of great trees petrified with age and submerged beneath the water. They were ancient even before the battles of the Dawn War and are riddled with cavities, some filled with water and others with stagnant air. Diving hunters who swim from tree to tree or those who find a way through the air pockets within the petrified limbs must pry out the abominations that find refuge among the underwater tree caverns.

Rumors suggest that Gloaminghold, a house full of curiosities built by the renowned tiefling warlock Duskmoon, is located in one of the Reef Catacombs; it offers sanctuary to those who can bypass its magical defenses.

The Wasteland of Burnt Blood: One sizzling stretch of badlands blights Arvandor's pure landscape. The Wasteland of Burnt Blood, a ravaged black desert pitted by pools of scalding red liquid, was forged in a battle between Corellon and Gruumsh that took place before the Dawn War.

AVANDRA'S AND MELORA'S EXALTED

Exalted of Avandra and Melora can awaken in any of the dominions other than the Nine Hells. They are most welcome in Arvandor and Celestia. Unlike other exalted, the exalted of Avandra and Melora come back to life regardless of the dominion in which they were slain. Usually, though, they come back in a dominion other than the one in which they died. Neither Avandra's nor Melora's exalted care about immortality the way other exalted do. Frequently, they are found traveling far from any dominion.



Gruumsh entered Arvandor to destroy the dominion before it could be properly built, and Corellon met him in battle atop a mountain. Sehanine and Lolth respected Corellon's wish to face Gruumsh in single combat; however, while Sehanine had eyes only for Corellon, Lolth watched Gruumsh in secret, admiring his rage. Corellon came out the victor, and Gruumsh's blood fell in thick droplets that scalded the land for ten miles in all directions.

Abominations are drawn to the seething Wasteland of Burst Blood, since memories of Gruumsh's fury and power seeped into the land there. For this reason, the Glorious Hunt often sweeps through the site of Corellon's ancient victory.

Any creature in the area gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls, but takes a -2 penalty to AC. For bloodied creatures, the bonus and penalty are +5 and -5 respectively.

MAJOR AREAS

The dominion of Corellon and Sehanine is split between civilized splendor and rugged wilderness. Visitors to the realm find relative peace in Estaira

or the Court of the Seldarine, but once they venture beyond the aegis of the wards and the fey guardians, they are on their own in the eternal Hunting Lands.

The Bark Fleet: A "site" in constant movement, the bark fleet consists of huge, three-masted ships shaped from living trees that sail or drift along Arvandor's seas, great rivers, and hidden waters. Creatures of all races and faiths dwell in the fleet, particularly halflings and the exalted of Avandra and Melora, who pass pleasant seasons in the dominion of Arvandor. These ships are sometimes known to sail beyond the shining waters of Arvandor and into the Astral Sea. The greatest are so large and complex that they resemble small forested islands. The wanderers of the fleet are known for their curiosity and willingness to gamble, making them popular trading and traveling companions for planar adventurers.

Court of the Seldarine: Atop the tallest hill in Arvandor stands a ring of fey-touched menhirs in the middle of a glorious fey palace. This hallowed place is Nath Seldarie, where Corellon and Sehanine

CORELLON, GRUUMSH, AND LOLTH

The enmity between Corellon and Gruumsh is legendary. It began before the two deities expanded their power bases to include non-eladrin and non-orc worshipers respectively, before their grudging cooperation out of necessity in the Dawn War, and even before the creation of the mortal races. In part, they hate one another because they are diametric opposites: Gruumsh, with his strength, impossible vitality, and berserker rage, against Corellon, with his grace, intelligence, and magic. Some stories cast Corellon and Gruumsh as divine echoes, showing Corellon blessed with the power of beautiful creation, while

Gruumsh can only destroy. Where Corellon famously cut out one of Gruumsh's eyes, however, Gruumsh has never grievously wounded Corellon.

Or has he? Some divinations suggest that Lolth's betrayal of Corellon was due in part to a secret alliance with Gruumsh, with whom she is said to have dallied in the ages before the Dawn War. If this story holds any truth, then Lolth must have betrayed Gruumsh as she had betrayed Corellon, for Gruumsh hates Lolth as much as he has ever hated the Lord of the Seldarine.

hold court with numerous lesser powers and exarchs called the Seldarine. These powerful soulforms make up the core of fey belief and legend; they are considered patrons or saints to elves and eladrin. Most fey stories involve them and their exploits.

First among them (in infamy if not in power) is Erevan Ilesere, the Fey Jester, patron of tricksters and mischief. He serves as messenger and intermediary between his king and queen, taking no side but his own, and tends to make a situation worse in the name of jest. He has found a way out of every scrape, however, and never seems to mind being caught in his own schemes (which often occurs). He favors mortals at whim, bestowing upon them a mark of his affections, usually in the form of a starburst tattoo. This mark is both a blessing and a curse, indicative of a great, chaotic destiny.

Two other Seldarine frequently encountered by adventurers are Fenmarel Mestarine, the Lone Wolf, and Shevarash of the Black Bow. The patron of rangers, Fenmarel is a taciturn, perpetually aloof spirit who roams Arvandor, aiding in the various Glorious Hunts (though he does so indirectly and silently, maintaining his solitude). As patron of fury and vengeance, the exarch Shevarash is quick to take offense at mortals (who irritate him just by existing) and chooses to join wholeheartedly in doomed Hunts. He has led hundreds of ruesti to their final, albeit glorious, deaths.

The Empire of Estaira: Estaira, the most built-up realm in Arvandor, is an evolving blend of a perfect fey kingdom and a realm touched by humans, half-lings, and exalted of all races. With banners lifting in the wind, fantastic fluting towers rise from the cliffs of Estaira to stand vigil over those who would enter the seas of Arvandor. A spray of sapphire water under a perfect blue sky welcomes travelers from the turbulent Astral Sea into the veritable cradle of elven myth and the heart of forests born before time.

The capital of Estaira is the great city of Faen Verdaya, whose art and culture remain true to the land's origin as a fey paradise. Exalted beings lounge on divans among vibrant blooms in the atria, dance in great halls open to gentle sunlight and perfect breezes, or swim in lakes as pure and clear as glass. The crystalline towers of Faen Verdaya resonate with songs and prayers of ages past; they catch the divine light of Arvandor and cast it rippling through the streets, bathing everything in a perpetual glow. Coronal Lysildya, the eladrin mistress of Faen Verdaya, rules in Corellon's name and encourages her folk to honor ancient works of artistic beauty as well as to create their own.

Inland, Estaira's maze of rivers and lightly forested islands provides homes, groves, and communities for the exalted of Arvandor who are not involved with the Glorious Hunt, or who seek months or years away from its demands.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Glorious Hunt provides opportunity for dangerous adventures in the exotic and ever-shifting Hunting Lands. Threats from outside the dominion also can complicate matters.

Poisoned Hunt: Exalted of Melora in a hunting party that left ahead of the characters are revealed to be exalted of Zehir. What magic covered their identities? Do the darksworn (page 80) want to slay specific exalted that are on the Hunt, or are their targets also the abominations?

Easy Travel for a Price: Sehanine's moongates to other dominions and other worlds are scattered through Arvandor, sometimes opening where least expected, whether triggered by jumping off a high ledge or passing through a hidden grotto. Offering her gates as launch points for quests and adventures pleases Sehanine, as long as those borrowing the use of the gate can provide her or her people with a gift fit for the deity of love and the moon.

The Remade Abomination: A dangerous, desperate soul trapped in Carceri has remade itself as an abomination and escaped into Arvandor. Corellon wants to give this villain a swift death before the world pays the price for its escape.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

The most frequent encounters in Arvandor involve animals and beasts grown to prodigious size and power, followed by abominations that are the target of Glorious Hunts. Voracias (page 133) in particular abound in Arvandor, owing to their undying hatred for the fey races. Since Sehanine's moongates connect to hundreds of locations outside Arvandor, and since the moongates' seals sometimes break, characters might encounter a creature that has passed through one. A more diverse range of encounters exists in Arvandor's border islands—known as the Green Isles (page 42)—because getting into the border islands is easier than encroaching into Arvandor. (The level 28 encounter below is a typical one of this sort.)

Level 16 Encounter (XP 7,600)

- ♦ 1 guulvorg (level 16 elite brute, MM 265)
- ♦ 2 thunderfury boars (level 15 brute, MM 35)
- ♦ 1 rakshasa warrior (level 15 soldier, MM 216)

Level 22 Encounter (XP 23,000)

- ♦ 1 dark naga (level 21 elite controller, MM 194)
- ♦ 1 voracia (level 22 elite skirmisher, page 133)
- ♦ 1 astral stalker (level 22 elite lurker, MM 10)

Level 28 Encounter (XP 67,000)

- ♦ 1 phane (level 26 elite controller, MM 13)
- ♦ 1 balor (level 27 elite brute, MM 53)
- ♦ 1 efreet karadjin (level 28 soldier, MM 100)
- ♦ 2 efreet pyresingers (level 25 controller, MM 99)



THE GREEN ISLES: ARVANDOR'S ARCHIPELAGO

Verdant islands are situated on the borders of the dominion of Arvandor, floating in a silvery medium that is half Arvandor's waters, half Astral Sea. They are forested places of great beauty, though they can't match the glories found nearby in Arvandor.

Corellon, Sehanine, and the other two free gods hope for the best for their people on these border islands, but they and their servants rarely offer direct support due to the effect the border islands have on them (see "Islands of the Broken Lattice," page 36).

Food grows easily in the fertile soil of the Green Isles, and hunting is plentiful. The islands are rich in natural resources, but the people of the Isles discourage mining.

Many of Corellon's and Sehanine's deceased followers who end as outsiders are happy with the world they have carved for themselves in the Green Isles. Because Arvandor is host to the Glorious Hunt, life in the Green Isles resembles life in the dominion in large measure. A few of these outsiders reawake in Arvandor when they die.

MAJOR AREAS

Starhallow, the Wild Islands, Tael Faris, and the Twisted Temples of Lyef Thierre are but a few of the interesting locations where the characters can adventure in the Green Isles.

STARHALLOW

This island city-state takes its name from the bright star shining over it, put there by the magic of outsiders and visible for leagues across the Astral Sea. The star's purpose is to offer a guiding light to those traveling the Astral Sea, and perhaps to rival Arvandor's light. Depending on the angle of approach from the silver waters, a traveler might see the star burning even more brightly than the dominion behind it.

The folk of Starhallow have not accepted their fate as Arvandor's castoffs. They have chosen to live passionately and fully, to prove that even if their heaven has rejected them, they are worthy of remembrance. They defend themselves well; softer targets exist elsewhere in the Green Isles.

The largest port for travelers bound for Arvandor, Starhallow is notably less radiant than its sister city, Faen Verdaya. While the capital of Estaira is pure and bright with arcane miracles, Starhallow feels like the world below, where passions lead to trouble and blood leaves stains. Folk of every race and background fill the streets. Merchant vessels float into Starhallow, bringing mundane or exotic goods from other parts of the Astral Sea.

Starhallow's current ruler is a mortal eladrin wizard named Coronal Deliyi, whose power stems from a history of excellent decision-making and the fact that anyone who threatens Starhallow's existence suffers a bizarre magical death. Deliyi frequently accepts other mortals as temporary consultants.

The city is divided into three parts: the Docks, the Hallows, and the Family Towers.

The Docks: The ramshackle docks ward is the center of the adventurer's life in Starhallow. It is hardly as fabulous as the port in Hestavar, but the place is infused with a certain fey ambiance that puts visitors into a good mood, letting inhibitions fade. Visitors who never sing are heard humming, those who normally say they can't dance are seen skipping for a moment, and folk who are rowdy and uncouth to begin with make the docks area one of the Astral Sea's most exuberantly dangerous scenes.

The Docks function as a thriving black market that deals in stolen goods: coins from a thousand worlds and dominions, objects of curious and exotic artistic value, and a wide assortment of magic treasures. Merchants pay extra to obtain items from Arvandor and in turn charge exorbitant fees when selling blade-singer swords, eladrin mantles, and the like. Let the buyer pay heed, however, for such purchases bear no guarantees; items bought on the black market might function in unexpected ways or not at all.

The Halls: Most of the folk of Starhallow reside in the central Halls, a rambling district built of stone and living forest. Houses lie stacked upon one another, and awakened trees move folk to and from their destinations. Towers where eladrin wizards practice their arcane arts border elven groves. Products take on a more consistent quality in the Halls than in the docks, and those who shop here can commission the production of fantastic magic items or works of art from the finest spellcasters in the Astral Sea.

The Family Towers: Most border islands last for a few centuries at most, but the Family Towers are thousands of years old. Elves, eladrin, and creatures of other races dwell here within graceful spires fraying with age. The Towers' magic depends on the housing of inhabitants who are related to each other. Outsiders from a specific extended family occupy each tower. Even exalted from various dominions sometimes are drawn to the Family Towers to greet and live alongside extended family members who did not become exalted.

Sometimes only one or two residents occupy a tower, but if a tower empties completely, the next pair or group of outsiders that has rediscovered family ties in the border islands claims it. Once the Towers had only elf and eladrin lines. Now a smattering of halfling, human, shifter, and gnome families is represented, along with one extended family of four half-orcs.

THE WILD ISLANDS

Heavily forested, the scattered wilderness islands in the Green Isles have little to distinguish them from each other, at least in the eyes of outsiders. Small groups of outsiders, mortals, and even occasional exalted of Sehanine, Melora, or Avandra live peacefully in the shelter of the trees; they fish with spears and lines from canoes in the Astral Sea, and defend themselves as best they can against monsters and raiders.

The people of Starhallow refer to the four largest wild islands as Crownwood, Blood Tongue, Destruction Island, and Badger, though the people who live on the islands perhaps have other names for them. Crownwood is named after its most common tree. Blood Tongue is the name of a small tribe of outsiders that has re-created the traditions of the primal way even though they lack its magic, since only adventuring characters can draw easily on the power of the primal spirits from the Astral Sea. Destruction Island has witnessed at least three spectacular airship crashes and still yields trophies from the crashes to those who can dig them out of the thick forests. Badger looks like its namesake when viewed from the air. Coincidentally or not, the island's most notable inhabitants are a loose-knit association of magical beasts; they are former worshipers of the gods of Arvandor that became outsiders, instead of appearing in that dominion.

Pirate ships and other covert travelers make landfall on the far side of the Wild Islands, away from Arvandor, to gather supplies before raiding bigger targets. Landing on the far shores might not be necessary, but flyers from Arvandor occasionally spiral watchfully over the islands, and pirates don't prosper by risking needless exposure.

Tael Faris

Home to the House of Moon and Stars, a mighty temple to both Corellon and Sehanine, Tael Faris is less a tranquil island than a city built upon the silver waters, sculpted from trees, stone, and moonlight. The night is twice as long as the day in Tael Faris, and the moon bathes the temple in radiance and shadow.

With each daybreak and nightfall, beautiful songs resonate through the city's vine-wrapped pillars and carven embankments. Travelers to Tael Faris are captivated by the music, although those who speak Elven soon realize that the words serve cunning double entendre, simultaneously as hymns of praise and ironic counterpoint.

The outsiders of Tael Faris are mostly elves, eladrin, and gnomes. Nonfey outsiders lack the taste for both bittersweet melancholy and savage jest.

THE TWISTED TEMPLES OF LYEF THIERRE

At first glance, Lyef Thierre looks like another of the large wilderness islands that dot the sea around Arvandor. A mile into its interior, however, pines, redwoods, and oaks give way to thicker jungle plants. Ancient pyramids, half choked with creeping vines, depict scenes from cults having nothing to do with the gods of Arvandor. The mortals and outsiders who occupy this island don't want to be seen by others. At various points in recent history, devils, aberrations, shattered godlings, and a rogue primordial have benefited from the scattershot worship of these cultists. Though the full meaning of their acts is lost to the ruined souls of Lyef Thierre, the consequences are bloody enough.

Green hills and majestic mountains cover the isle of Celestia, which is home to the deities Bahamut, Kord, and Moradin. Each god claims one of the realm's seven great peaks as his seat of power and competes for temporary jurisdiction over the four unoccupied mountains in a ritualistically complex and tactically subtle competition called the Game of Mountains. In the rugged archipelago known as the Foothills, the nearly exalted live in the shadows of the competition on the peaks.

The isle of Celestia is one hundred twenty miles long. Its tallest summit towers ten miles above the



Astral Sea below. The gods live on the three tallest mountains, which are collectively known as the throne peaks. Each deity can reshape his peak at will to suit his personality and needs.

Travelers nearing Celestia sail into the gray waters that surround the islands of the Foothills. After navigating the Foothills, they come to the dominion's shimmering golden veil. Piercing the veil brings them onto a band of soothing green water lapping at Celestia's shores.

A nightless realm, Celestia is lit by the radiance of its mountains. The light emanating from them varies throughout the day, from rosy and glowing to yellow and bright. At noon, the golden light reaches its brightest, before slowly shading back to orange and then pink again. Generally, silver clouds hang in the sky, providing shade where needed and an occasional brief, refreshing shower; if Kord is in ascendance in the Game of Mountains (see page 46), however, the silver clouds build into thunderheads and let loose their storms.

Verdant forests and lush meadows cover the mountains' lower reaches. Cities clad in gleaming tiles of snow-white clay fill the plateaus. Higher up, mystic monasteries precariously perch atop sheer purple cliffs, briefly shadowed by the wings of mithral and gold dragons or other flying creatures that live in the valleys and on the high slopes. Blanketing each summit, the ice and snow of eternal glaciers reflect and amplify the realm's beautiful light.

Whether a visitor stands near the pluming exhaust of Moradin's forges or in a glacial field, the dominion's temperature remains pleasant and mild. The fragrance of wildflowers wafts through the realm,

THE SEVEN PEAKS

Celestia's seven peaks, in descending order, are as follows:

- ◆ Venya, also known as Snowbeard, the rampart peak, home to Kord and his warrior retinue.
- ◆ Solania, the clouded peak also called the Rainfather, where Moradin keeps his forge.
- ◆ Mertion, the dragon aerie, where Bahamut holds sway.
- ◆ Jusor, the least steep of the seven mountains, ascended by way of wide slopes that function as giant ramps.
- ◆ Fulghen, a rough and dangerous mountain of knife-edged ridges and crevasses, regularly climbed by those who want to swear great oaths upon its summit.
- ◆ Perantia, riddled by ever-shifting caverns and underground rivers that break onto the surface to form ice cascades.
- ◆ Chronias, the final pilgrimage site for Celestia's exalted and keeper of the final mysteries.

competing with steam from the forges and the sharp scent of lightning-crackled air.

MAJOR AREAS

Although Celestia is generally considered safe, adventures can occur anywhere, especially if Kord's warriors are nearby and bored. Here are three sites (among many) in the dominion where the characters might find trouble.

TORZAK-BELGIRN

Near the summit of Solania, lorded over by Moradin, hums the metallic forge city of Torzak-Belgirn. Extended by metal platforms buttressed into the mountainside, the city's precious metal surfaces turn it into a reflective beacon whose glow is visible throughout the dominion. In Torzak-Belgirn, the soulforms of master dwarf smiths work to fashion resplendent armor of unrivaled quality. The city's smokestacks emit wispy vapor that coalesces with the realm's silvery cloud cover.

EMPYRON

The so-called City of Healing on Jusor offers succor to wounded mortals and waning souls. Pilgrims afflicted with curses, poisons, and ailments that are curable nowhere else make the trek to consult Empyron's immortal healers. Many have their health restored by the mere sight of the city's walls and need no further treatment. The city rests on the shore of a cold, dark mountain lake. Reflected in its gently rippling surface is the mirrored light of otherwise unseen stars.

ASIRYET

Crowning the summit of Chronias is the heavenly city of Asiryet. Its sections appear to hover in the air, but in fact they occupy platforms of magical force. Asiryet is where Celestia's exalted gather when their inner lights finally dwindle. Impelled by the sense that their time has come, they proceed to a mithral gate, behind which lies the Bridge of al-Sihal. An angel of great beauty stands guard there to turn back those who have not earned the right to cross. Whether the souls who walk the bridge enter a state of oneness with the universe or step through a portal into yet another heaven isn't known by any mortal being.

GODS OF CELESTIA

In times past, the gods of Celestia have been allies, rivals, and briefly even enemies. In the centuries since the Dawn War, their interests have diverged. One or another of their aspects might join in the Game of Mountains, but otherwise each god pursues his own agenda. The trio is probably capable of joint action, but such hasn't been required of them for some time.

MORADIN'S FORGE

Moradin embodies the taciturn self-reliance—rivals might call it self-absorption—of his favored people, the dwarves. His preoccupation is the refinement and perfection of the smithing arts. Moradin dismisses as frivolous any other divine business, assigning it to his exalted functionaries. The most honored members of his retinue are his exalted armorers and weapon-smiths. Together they work ceaselessly to make ever more sturdy, beautiful, and powerful weapons, shields, and armor. Although the products of his forge already are acknowledged to be the greatest ever brought into existence anywhere, improvements to them are constantly attempted, though difficult to attain. Whenever a new technique fails, Celestia's entire surrounding archipelago quakes with Moradin's ire.

When the god's agents leave Solania, it is usually to hunt down lost weapons and methods of manufacture. Moradin's focus on weapon-building and defense appears to be justified monomania, because the point of his work is protecting the dominions of the gods from attack. The small number of offensive incursions into the Astral Sea supports the viewpoint that Moradin's efforts are succeeding. Certainly, fear of Moradin's weapons keeps assorted primordials from resuming catastrophic battles reminiscent of the Dawn War.

KORD'S BATTLES

Kord, yearning for action, paces the reverberant iron halls of his palace atop Venya. Ever ready for cosmic battles that are slow to arrive, Kord has formed the notion that the current chapter in the history of the cosmos will conclude with the Dusk War—a conflict to match the ferocity of the Dawn War that started the chapter. He is as yet uncertain whom the Dusk War will be fought against. The Far Realm? The primordials again? The evil gods? An unknown entity? If outside observers were privy to Kord's thoughts, they might realize that the god of storm and battle is growing increasingly likely to start a great cosmic conflict of his own, in order to stop wondering from which quarter the next attack will come.

As a god of war and as the last nearly successful invader of Celestia—when he attacked the realm as part of the failed coup by his mother Khala—Kord

knows how to prepare for great battles to come. (For details of Kord's role in that incident, see "The War of Winter" on page 67 of *Divine Power*™.) He perpetually hones his horde of exalted warriors into an irresistible force. When no battle is being fought, the warriors joust with each other. They sharpen their lust for victory by participating in the Game of Mountains. Bloodless combat with no risk of utter destruction, however, keeps Kord's warriors amused only briefly. Kord occasionally sends his favored exalted out into the Astral Sea to find enemies in need of a smiting. Sometimes the war god's exalted join in the Glorious Hunt in Arvandor; at other times, they cruise in a dominion ship, hoping to run into devils or githyanki pirates. Since such foes aren't easy to find, and since Kord's exalted aren't particular about whom they fight, any worthy opponent that has the least touch of darkness (or even character-style shadiness) can expect a sudden assault from Kord's elite.

BAHAMUT'S ARKS

Possibly because of his ongoing skirmish with Tiamat, Bahamut is the most outward-looking of Celestia's gods. He keenly regrets the injustice of the present divine dominions. To him, the flawed mechanism by which some deserving mortals are arbitrarily excluded from their gods' heavens is obviously unjust. Bahamut truly regrets that his divine responsibilities and his struggle with Tiamat prevent him from fully addressing the injustice, but he has harnessed the skills and the will of his exalted to take a small step of redress toward balance.

Bahamut's exalted are building several great arks intended to cruise the Astral Sea around the Foothills and to provide a more comfortable and enjoyable existence to outsiders that are devoted to the deities of Celestia or other friendly gods. The ark project is a compromise solution, since Bahamut and his exarchs and angels can't use their full power on border islands, and Bahamut can't invite outsiders into Celestia.

Bahamut's first great ark is nearly finished. When launched, it will sail through the Foothills, taking on outsiders judged worthy and able to help crew the ark. The ark will have room only for about two thousand outsiders, so Bahamut's exalted know that justice will remain limited. Also, because Bahamut has such vindictive enemies, arranging functional security for an ark straying far from Celestia is a thorny problem. The ark project's success or failure, at least temporarily, might depend on the involvement of planar adventurers.

THE GAME OF MOUNTAINS

Moradin's and Bahamut's exalted are not immune to pride and rivalry, and Kord's exalted consider those qualities to be virtues. After a series of unseemly incidents in the early centuries of their joint occupation of Celestia, the three gods joined to create a tradition that channels friction between their followers into friendly competition. Over time, the tradition has developed into its current form as the Game of Mountains, a once-per-season contest whose objectives combine the determination and occasional subtlety of Bahamut, the raging force of Kord, and Moradin's love of creation.

THE OBJECTIVE

The Game of Mountains is a team sport played for ceremonial control of the four great unclaimed mountains of Celestia, where the gods do not dwell. The game is contested between three teams, one representing each of Celestia's gods. Contestants score points for their team by solely occupying the summits of the unclaimed mountains for short intervals; they gain a dramatically greater number of points for each additional summit simultaneously controlled by the team. After three consecutive days of play, an overall winner is declared.

THE SETTING

Although a few isolated settlements, observatories, temples, and guard posts are built on the other four mountains (including the city of Asiryet on Chronias), the unclaimed slopes are preserved as untamed wilderness. Exalted, occasional elementals, and spirits roam and hunt on the wild slopes, but those playing the Game of Mountains have the greatest impact. The winner of a given episode of the game is responsible for repairing damage to keep the mountains from looking like a war zone. Adding new geographic features and magical marvels to the slopes instead of just repairing them is customary, so that the topography of the cliffs, chimneys, and wind-blasted glaciers changes frequently.

THE RULES

Part of the game's appeal is that rules and team sizes change each season, resulting in each contest playing out differently. Teams can include epic-level mortals as well as exalted. Such "ringers" are sometimes allies rather than worshipers of the god for whom they play. Most of the names of the four standard versions of the game indicate the team sizes needed for play: the Seven Champions Game, the Game of Twenty-Three, Seventies, and the Full Game (144 players per team).

At least one contest each year uses few rules, other than forbidding contestants to interact with or harm

those who live on the mountains. Variations that keep the other contests unpredictable include the following.

Climber's Game: No flying or teleporting is allowed; all contestants must ascend or descend each mountain the hard way.

Deathmarch: A contestant can use healing magic only on himself or herself.

Flyers' Game: All contestants must be capable of flight. (Mithral dragons that live in the mountains year round become popular recruits in this format.)

Mixed Teams: Each god's team must contain more or less equal numbers of exalted or devotees of its god.

Resurrection Game: Slain contestants are resurrected in 30 minutes instead of the next day.

ADJUDICATION

Five exalted act as officials. Four of them each take position on a different summit, noting when points are scored. The fifth member of the judging team, bearing the title of Four Mountains Master, adjudicates rules disputes. By original agreement, the Four Mountains Master is a follower of Bahamut. The dragon god's retinue complains that this is a disadvantage, believing that the Master overcompensates against accusations of bias.

An overall game winner is declared after a tally of points scored on all mountains. The winner determines the weather on the four lowest peaks in the season to come, which in turn tends to determine the weather in Celestia's border islands. Victory is considered good luck for the winning god's followers in the world.

THE FOOTHILLS: CELESTIA'S ARCHIPELAGO

To sailors heading along the astral horizon toward Celestia, its surrounding island chain looks like a set of hills contiguous with the realm. For this reason the archipelago was dubbed the Foothills.

In fact, its rocky green hills emerge from the Astral Sea. Beautiful from a distance, they become more rugged and forbidding the closer a traveler comes to them. Occasional patches of grass or moss cling tenaciously to naked stone. Rain, sleet, and hail materialize from nowhere to lash cold slopes, particularly when Kord has gained ascendance in the Game of Mountains.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

The Foothills provide a home to refugees throughout the Astral Sea, both mortal and soulform. Of the mortals, one in ten are recent arrivals born in the earthly realms, and the others are descendants of mortals who became lost in the Astral Sea and have never set

foot on mundane soil. Represented among them are cultures long since vanished from the world.

Whether new refugees or old, the inhabitants of the Foothills came here because the archipelago seemed the safest port amid the Astral Sea's manifold dangers. Newcomers arrive expecting a modicum of protection from heavenly Celestia and its trio of benevolent gods, and a modicum of protection is exactly what they get. On a random schedule, the exalted of Celestia venture out in dominion ships to vanquish githyanki raiders, quom comet-ships (page 102), and scouts from the Nine Hells. The exalted don't patrol regularly, however, and they notice large-scale threats, not minor problems. Small numbers of monsters and ships have little trouble slipping into the Foothills undetected.

Bored by the splendors of the palace on Venya, members of Kord's exalted retinue periodically swarm into the Foothills in search of a rougher place to spar. Residents of the Foothills regard these incursions with a mixture of hope and trepidation. When the residents are beset by pirates or other exploiters, the champions of Kord direct their martial fury at the oppressors. But without obvious villains to rout, Kord's hordes spell nothing but trouble. His champions hack away at each other, heedless of the collateral damage they wreak.

MAJOR AREAS

Eight of the key locations in the Foothills are described below.

STOUTHOME

The dwarf community of Stouthome, also called the Stout, grimly scatters across a dome-shaped island known as the Anvil. One-fourth of its inhabitants are mortal; the rest are outsiders. Few exalted stay amid the community for long. Whether mortal or outsider, six in ten Stouthomers are of dwarven origin; the rest are of mixed backgrounds. They supplement their meager means by trawling the green seas for edible astral beasts. There are few meals served in Stouthome that do not feature the tough, pungent flesh of the fist-shaped astral "fish" (really a tiny aberrant creature) called the zilul. Stouthome's dispirited residents have given up trying to make the creature palatable. They take a taciturn pride in the hardship of their lives and the depths of their ancestral disappointment. Stouthomers might disapprove of everyone from anywhere else, but they don't let that attitude stop them from addressing their financial desperation. They grudgingly offer chilly hospitality to visitors who seem trustworthy, and as hosts they do their best to squeeze exorbitant fees from their guests for as long as those guests can stand to stay.

RUINS OF BENTSWORD

The clash of spectral weapons against soulformed armor rings across the flattened ruins of Bentsword. Although the ruins mainly hold a legion of outsider warriors, a few maddened mortals also dwell there. The warriors of Bentsword dedicated their lives to warfare and to Kord, but now believe that they have dishonored themselves and that exclusion from Celestia is the price they pay for cowardice in their life. (They're probably wrong, but saying so to a drunken berserker who has a guilty conscience is pointless.) In an attempt to redeem themselves, they stage epic battles, hoping that Kord or one of his exalted will recognize the valor of the best warriors and elevate those who are worthy to exalted status in their next life, if not in this one. Warriors who believe they have proved themselves are not shy about fighting to the death and taking their chances.

Others have given up hope of joining Kord. They now fight to impress the occasional recruiters who come to Bentsword seeking warriors. They take positions as bodyguards, pirates, or even mercenaries in the armies of Bane. Bentsword's fame as a recruiting center for sellswords increasingly attracts warriors who have no desire to join Kord's host, including a smattering of mortal wanderers. Characters who find themselves at loose ends can seek paid assignments from Bentsword's recruiters.

FLEECE ISLES

The seven meadow-covered islands collectively called the Fleece Isles provide a home to a graceful, bucolic society of shepherds. Its people are mostly outsiders, although they allow mortals to stay with them as short-term guests, and are rumored to host two long-term exalted citizens who come from Hestavar and Arvador, rather than Celestia. Resigned to their outsider status, the Fleece Islanders devote their remaining existence to the pursuit of refined and gentle pleasures. They value music, poetry, and the culinary arts. Merchant ships dock at the Fleece Isles to purchase butter, cheese, wool, and exquisitely woven garments. These commodities attract the attention of pirates, including githyanki. Unwilling to perturb their serenity with martial pursuits, Fleece Islanders rely on friends from Bentsword or hired buccaneers to defend them against raids. It's rumored that they can pay for such assistance with riches from a secret astral diamond deposit somewhere within one of the isles.

THE GALLOWS

This landmass takes its name from an L-shaped rock formation jutting out from its hilltop. Arrayed around this formation are conical iron huts belonging to the Golden Noose, a band of vigilante outsiders. Its members, former worshippers of Kord and Bahamut,

maintain a heavily armed fleet of astral warships. They rove the local waters and the Astral Sea in search of evildoers, whom they capture and bring back to the island. There, in the shadow of Merton, Bahamut's mountainous eyre of justice and virtue, they mercilessly hang their captives from the rocky formation.

The leadership of the Noose consists of a seven-soul council. Whether revising its strict code of behavior or choosing targets, the council makes decisions by consensus. Nonmembers treat the council's spokesperson as its leader, even though he or she is in fact its most junior member. Council members, serene in their immovable righteousness, view the duty of dealing with others as a distasteful annoyance. Councilors serve until they die or choose to resign. Then, after a month-long period of campaigning, a successor is chosen by voice vote. All duly initiated members of the Noose can participate in this vote, provided they're physically present on the island. Captains of Golden Noose ships are the individuals most likely to be elevated to the council. Because councilors aren't allowed to endanger themselves by taking active part in missions, captains who prefer to remain on the hunt resist this promotion. They might campaign against themselves but, if elected, they are obligated to serve.

Ships of githyanki pirates and quom fanatics, two of the Noose's frequent targets, attack the island on a regular basis. From offshore, they bombard the iron huts with catapult fire or attempt to place the Gallows under blockade. This latter tactic rarely works, because Golden Noose siege engines rain destruction on them from above.

While pursuing their designated quarry, Golden Noose crew members keep their ears open for news of other wrongdoers. Their scouts gather evidence for consideration by the council. Applicants seeking the punishment of particular enemies often approach Noose personnel in distant ports rather than make the treacherous journey to the Gallows to address the full council, since the council can order the hanging of applicants who enter its home to make wrongful accusations.

HIGHCLIFF

Fishlike dragonborn populate the ramshackle settlement of Highcliff, which rests on a sheer plateau above a deceptively placid cove. Skulking residents roll human-sized boulders off the cliff onto any astral vessel unwisely moored below. Aided by their pet stone golems, the residents salvage whatever is left of the shattered ships. Highcliff's dragonborn are mortal; they worship a nameless oceanic primordial that was felled during the Dawn War. They claim that Celestia dropped onto their primordial lord in the same way their rocks drop upon unwary ships. The Highcliff dragonborn sacrifice valuables and



food items on dark altars dedicated to the primordial, even though they believe it to have been irrevocably destroyed. Bahamut warns his servants to steer clear of the primordial's followers, perhaps being unsure whether or not the nameless one might return.

THE PILLAR

This tiny isle is dominated by a massive watchtower, which stretches high above the astral horizon. The bitter and eccentric souls dwelling in the tower's dusty chambers claim to be former gods who were reduced to mere outsiders during the Dawn War.

They promise the secrets of the gods to those willing to brave the tower's collection of arcane traps. For the effort of navigating these hazards, daring seekers receive a stream of mad babble that later worms its way into their thoughts and dreams; seemingly inane, tantalizing nuggets of useful information can be extracted at times from the distressing gibberish. Some travelers come away from the Pillar certain that a deeper and more troubling truth lurks behind the insanity.

Among the common petitioners to the watchtower souls are prospective contestants in the Game of Mountains. They painstakingly transcribe the ramblings of Pillar residents, believing that these mad entities provide veiled clues to successful strategy in the next game. When the game is afoot, the weather around the Pillar shifts according to the identity of the current high-scoring team—thunder for Moradin, tempest winds for Kord, or a soothing breeze for Bahamut.

THE TANGLE

Former worshipers of Kord and Melora disport on the steep-sided, heavily forested island called the Tangle. The name refers to the island's thick vegetation, which makes travel difficult for all but experienced woodsfolk. Inhabitants inure themselves to outdoor living in extreme climatic conditions, because the island's magic makes it impossible to erect a roofed building anywhere on it; as soon as a structure is built, the island's roots, trees, and bushes muster to break the building down. As with the Pillar (see above), the weather on the Tangle depends on the most recent victor in the Game of Mountains.

Thousands of outsiders and a few rugged mortals live on the Tangle by foraging and hunting. Residents divide themselves into clans of a few dozen members. New arrivals wishing to live there must petition a clan for membership and prove themselves acceptable, usually by being companionable, uncomplaining, and physically able to forage. Those who don't join a clan soon learn that the magic of the island rejects them, preventing them from finding forage or drinkable water anywhere on the island. This effect is so strong that even imported food spoils within a few hours, and nonmagical liquids in containers, such as water, beer, or wine, quickly evaporate.

Inhabitants of the Tangle recognize no law or authority, except when a crime of violence occurs. They then gather their clan to decide if the accused will be allowed to remain in the clan. Social taboo prevents clan members from providing food to individuals who don't have clan membership, making exceptions only for hospitality provided to visitors staying less than a day. To protect themselves from pirate raids, residents store no food and keep no goods of value to the outside world.

TOUCHSTONE

The largest of the Foothills is Touchstone, a grassy hummock bounded by a field of ice. Standing at Touchstone's center is a protuberance of exposed and gnarled rock. A close inspection reveals that this so-called soul rock is composed of countless petrified humanoid figures. Touchstone is a final resting place for expiring soulforms; it draws dwindling souls in the same way that elephants are drawn to a mythic graveyard. With their final steps, the dying struggle to the rocky bulge in the island's center, turn to stone, and merge with the island for all eternity. The stony figures might retain a flicker of identity, though. Occasionally someone can commune ritually with otherwise extinguished spirits by touching their rocky remnants. A hardscrabble mortal population ekes out a chilly existence on the sparse grasslands ringing the central soul rock. The residents herd

goats and sheep and occasionally help a heavy-limbed outsider to complete his or her final ascent.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following hooks and plot ideas are possible adventures in the Foothills.

Dead God Sabotage: Some of Bahamut's exalted approach the characters regarding a bizarre problem. The exalted suspect that the materials they used in constructing the first great ark might contain too many fragments of Lakal, the quom's world deity (page 101). The quom already consider Bahamut to be their great enemy; his launching an ark laced with Lakal-motes into the Astral Sea would provoke the quom in ways that could only end badly for the outsiders coming aboard the ark. Bahamut's faithful need someone who can obtain a quom or quom magic to establish whether the ark is sabotaged, as divinations show it to be. If true, the exalted need to catch the culprits responsible for the sabotage and to deal squarely with the quom.

Honored Ancestor Rock Stolen: A githyanki raid hits the Foothills while the characters are in the area, destroying something that they value or stealing some of their possessions. Simultaneously, the githyanki search through the stone soulforms atop Touchstone and take a specific statue. Witnesses report that the statue started moving and struggled as the githyanki hauled it aboard their ship. The characters discover, sooner or later, that the stolen statue had family ties to someone in their group, being a grandparent or relative of one of them, and somehow that person has been revived from his or her statue-like state. The plot works better if it's established that the character in question had a notable ancestor a few generations earlier who left unfinished business with the githyanki.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Terrain effects in the Foothills derive from either their forbidding environment or the influence of Celestia's deities. Those resulting from the gods' influence are often field effects. Such effects are created when a deity's exalted linger in a place for an extended period, and they occur when the god in question is ascendant in the Game of Mountains. Fields potentially affect all or most of an encounter area. They remain dormant until certain actions are undertaken during an encounter. These actions establish small zones that remain active until the end of the encounter. Typical field effects are described below.

ARMORFIELDS

Where Moradin's exalted tread, armorfields spring up.

Effect: When a creature in an armorfield area takes cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, poison, radiant, or thunder damage, the space that the creature currently occupies becomes a zone until the end of the encounter. While a creature is within the zone, it gains resist 5 damage to that type of damage per tier. If the damage that created the zone has more than one type, the creature that triggered the creation of the zone selects one of those damage types as the resistance the zone confers.

Usage: Enemies that recognize the presence of an armorfield will use it to their advantage by moving into the zone's space. Because of the resistance, they will use attacks of the same type of damage against enemy and ally alike, trusting the resistance to protect their friends.

DRAINER LICHEN

The Foothills' rockier slopes are mottled by drainer lichen.

Effect: When a creature leaves a square of drainer lichen, it takes ongoing 5 radiant damage per tier until it reenters the drainer lichen square. Each square of drainer lichen can confer this ongoing damage only once each encounter.

Usage: Move enemies to a square of drainer lichen that a character leaves, forcing that character to take ongoing damage until the enemy can be moved off the square. Use soldiers with a high AC to make this tactic very effective.

GRAMBLE

The Foothills' rugged heaths are covered in patches of gramble, a dense, thorny bush with carnivorous instincts.

Effect: Gramble is often difficult terrain, and can also be blocking terrain, as some bushes are also tall and thick enough to block line of sight. When a creature ends its turn in or adjacent to a square of gramble, it is restrained until the start of its next turn. When a creature starts its turn in or adjacent to a square of gramble, it takes 5 damage per tier.

Usage: Combine patches of gramble with ranged attackers to create an area of difficult or blocking terrain that the characters have to move through or in between to reach their enemies.

MERCYFIELDS

Locations visited by Bahamut's exalted dragons develop into mercyfields.

Effect: If a creature in a mercyfield area is bloodied, the space that the creature currently occupies becomes a zone until end of encounter. When a creature starts its turn within the zone, it gains temporary hit points equal to one-half its healing surge value.

Usage: Put enemy brutes or soldiers in a mercyfield zone to make those creatures more difficult to defeat, especially if the space creates a choke point that the characters need to pass to get to a leader.

VALORFIELDS

When Kord's exalted gather to fight, they leave valorfields in their wake.

Effect: If a creature in a valorfield area is bloodied, the space that the creature currently occupies becomes a zone until the end of encounter. While a creature is within the zone, it grants combat advantage.

Usage: Have skirmishers and other mobile enemies try to maneuver characters into valorfields. Soldiers with the ability to mark and lock down enemies can maneuver a character onto a valorfield zone to make that character an easier target for its allies.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,900)

- ♦ 1 angel of battle (level 15 skirmisher, MM 14)
- ♦ 2 angels of protection (level 14 soldier, MM 15)
- ♦ 1 githzerai mindmage (level 14 artillery, MM 131)
- ♦ 2 angel of valor veterans (level 16 minion, MM 16)

Level 18 Encounter (XP 10,000)

- ♦ 2 quom enforcers (level 17 brute, page 156)
- ♦ 2 ice archon rimehammers (level 19 soldier, MM 20)
- ♦ 4 renegade souls (level 18 minion*)
* Use abyssal ghoul hungerer (MM 119); rename *claw* to *soul sword* and *dead blood* to *final oblivion*; the latter deals radiant damage instead of necrotic.

Level 22 Encounter (XP 24,550)

- ♦ 1 angel of authority (level 22 controller, *Monster Manual* 2 8)
- ♦ 1 durud slayer (level 23 lurker, page 158)
- ♦ 2 rakshasa dread knights (level 24 soldier, MM 218)
- ♦ 4 angel of valor legionnaires (level 21 minion, MM 16)

CHERNOGGAR

When mortal soldiers slog through the blood-soaked fields of a seemingly endless war, when enemies trap themselves in escalating cycles of violent revenge, or when someone stumbles onto a scene of senseless slaughter, they say, "We've entered Chernoggar." The roar of Chernoggar's battles thunders in the hearts of mortal warriors.

But few mortals can conceive of the panorama of war playing out in the dominion of the god of war and his enemy, the god of destruction. The noise alone shakes the soul—the rumble of thousands of booted feet, the ceaseless clash of sword and shield, the keening of forests of arrows, shouts of triumph and screams of pain, and death rattles as a battle-sworn exalted dies its temporary death.

In Chernoggar, all the glories and horrors of war play out second by second through eternity, as the devotees of two great powers engage in a proxy battle for their deities.

ORIGIN STORIES

Bane was either a mortal hero or a demigod who slew Tuern, the previous (and less disciplined) god of war in single combat, then took Tuern's power and wielded it well during the rest of the Dawn War. Confusion over Bane's identity comes from several sources, including his goblin worshipers, which want to think of him as a brother to both Kord and Tuern for reasons connected to goblins' extended family social structure.

Gruumsh is a mad god of destruction who deliberately crashed his dominion, Nishrek, into Bane's dominion. It's said that Gruumsh decided to take down Bane the moment that Bane pried the god of war's sword from Tuern's dead fingers, but preparing his dominion to soar across the Astral Sea and smash into Chernoggar apparently took eons of planning and the exercise of tremendous divine power. During the intervening years, Bane and Gruumsh fought on the same side in several battles, and on opposing sides in others. With a god as chaotic as Gruumsh, it's difficult to ever fully know where he stands. He finally wrenched Nishrek free of its original position in the splintering Lattice of Heaven and slammed it into Chernoggar—after the Dawn War was over, fortunately for the rest of the deities.

WHEN DOMINIONS COLLIDE

Thousands of years after Bane had defeated Tuern to become the god of war, Gruumsh brought Nishrek, his unstable realm of destructive volcanoes and constant carnage, crashing into Chernoggar—an act that should have torn both dominions apart. Bane's iron

will held Chernoggar together, but he succeeded only by fusing the dominion with Nishrek.

Nishrek had been a place of self-destructive savagery where souls favored by Gruumsh butchered one another for no reason other than to see things end. Yet the melding of two dominions gave that destruction a new purpose, and new victims for Gruumsh's favored to turn their fury upon. Bane, in turn, marshaled forces of his own, conscripting the souls of tyrants, war heroes, and strategists to battle alongside angelic hosts. The two deities became entangled in a war to prove superiority that neither has conclusively won in the centuries since.

Some sages believe that such a battle, once begun, cannot end: War cannot overcome the devastation it creates, and turmoil cannot resolve the wars it foment. The reasons they cite for the never-ending conflict include the refusal of Bane and Gruumsh from direct influence in the cosmos, the regular resurrection of the combatants, or the fact that other deities might want the war to continue. Regardless, Bane's ordered armies continue to press their tactical advantages while the crazed hordes of Gruumsh howl down upon them in endless avalanches.

A GEOGRAPHY OF WAR

Chernoggar spins violently through the Astral Sea as two conjoined realms still rocked by their ancient collision. The concussion caused by their merging crumpled volcanic peaks and created massive cracked canyons that continue to shift and burn. Although Bane's will fused the dominions, both the antagonism of the two deities and Chernoggar's whirling as it reels through the silver mists constantly threaten to tear it apart.

Volcanic peaks seethe all across Chernoggar, sullenly exhaling black ash when in Bane's iron grip and bursting to fiery rage where Gruumsh's faithful gain the upper hand. Quakes rumble through the earth, and new crevasses tear open the face of Chernoggar even as older canyons become clogged with corpses. Although some of the dominion burns with the heat of molten rock or is scoured by freezing winds, most places are oppressive and depressing to those who visit here. The rust-red sky hangs low over the land, and whether the weather brings fog, wind, hail, rain, or warmth, it lingers long past the point of comfort, making inhabitants short-tempered and distracted.

The Crash Peaks still scar the dominion, evidence of the ancient wound that sprang up where Nishrek and Chernoggar were joined. Yet so much of the territory has been claimed and reclaimed by the two warring sides that few could say for certain which deity once ruled an area without access to a map. Great fortresses, watchtowers, aeries, dungeon passes, patchwork redoubts, walls, battle trenches, ports, and

bunkers have all been built, lost, claimed, ruined, abandoned, and rebuilt many times over. Battlements run the dagger's edge of mountain ridgelines, ramble through bramble-choked valleys, and sink into swamps so soaked with blood that life there has adapted to being nourished by blood rather than by water. Weapons of war lie discarded all over the dominion; many riverbanks are strewn with more arrowheads than stones. Most who see Chernoggar for the first time wonder if they have entered the Nine Hells, but those who have seen that place appreciate Chernoggar for its brutal beauty. Unlike in the Hells, each day in Chernoggar offers moments of triumph and the slim chance of personal or cosmic victory.

GODS OF CHERNOGGAR

Bane and Gruumsh each have their own motivations and goals, both in their seemingly endless war and in their greater struggles within the Astral Sea.

BANE'S STRATEGY

The deities eventually relied upon Bane to lead them in the Dawn War, and many will look to him for leadership if the primordials or another threat to divine order arises. At the same time, Bane's constant struggle against Gruumsh is a matter that concerns those same deities. Shouldn't the best of all generals be able to defeat one deity, especially one so undisciplined



VINCENT DUTRAIT

as Gruumsh? Shouldn't Bane have seen Gruumsh coming, even if no one else did?

What the questioners fail to realize is that Bane is capable of strategic thinking beyond others' comprehension. Bane aims for nothing less than total domination. The Astral Sea, the Elemental Chaos, the world, its shadowy and twilit reflections—Bane will hold them all in his iron grip. Fully capable of fighting multiple wars at once, Bane allows others to believe that his war with Gruumsh preoccupies him while he makes subtle moves in a long-term plan. It suits his purposes to keep his servants honed for war, and the various thrashing offensives by Gruumsh's wild adherents resemble the tactics employed by demons and other elemental forces of chaos. Similarly, devils bound by contract stand among Bane's rank and file, and their efforts in the field inform those they fight alongside. When the next great cosmic battle erupts, the Iron General will understand all the contingencies, and his soldiers will know all they need to prevail.

GRUUMSH'S WRATH

The struggle between Bane and Gruumsh represents a conflict between pride and rage. Despite the pointlessness of the carnage, Bane will not concede to Gruumsh, and Bane's determined resistance keeps Gruumsh's fury in full swing. With immortal angels and resurrected battlesworn on both sides, the conflict cannot end unless an event significantly changes the field.

Bane might be content to test the mettle of his faithful in an eternal war, but Gruumsh forever seeks the killing stroke. His forces frequently take bold risks that impress even Bane's battlesworn, but they also make wild and even suicidal attacks that have little chance of success.

Chernoggar's war is thus in constant flux. Bane's forces make steady advances until a bizarre ploy by Gruumsh's armies opens a devastating break in Bane's ordered ranks. Then the battle lines change and the combatants begin fighting a wholly different war.

MAJOR AREAS

The vast landscape of Chernoggar hosts countless sites of note. Many locations have hosted battles that would be legendary if later conflicts hadn't obliterated all traces of them.

STAIRS OF WOE

Bane's portion of Chernoggar is filled with fortresses within fortresses. The first walls someone faces when entering it are the mile-high cliffs that raise the dominion high above the dry seabed that surrounds Chernoggar. Of the few paths that exist up or through the cliffs, the best known is the Stairs of Woe. This

steep and winding series of staircases runs from guard tower to guard tower, giving those who ascend the stairs little shelter from attacks from above. Bane's soldiers have controlled the stairs for the past hundred years, and those who earn Bane's wrath find themselves imprisoned in crow's cages along the ascent.

TUER-CHERN

The massive fortress-metropolis of Tuer-Chern, high above the perimeter of the dominion, is the seat of Bane's power. In all its long history, it has been besieged only a handful of times. No siege has truly had any hope of taking it.

CLANGOR

Maglubiyet, hobgoblin exarch of Bane, rules this fortified city of goblinoid battlesworn, bladelings, and their trained beasts and slaves. Clangor is known far and wide for its arena, where captives fight for their lives against one another or against merciless monsters.

TOWER OF SKULLS

Amid blasting peaks and billowing clouds of acidic smoke totters the Tower of Skulls, a massive structure of skulls of every variety, lashed together by chains and the innards of the slain. This fearsome palace is the seat of Gruumsh's power. The largest skulls are those of primordials and deities that Gruumsh slew. Others are offerings left by his followers. No enemies attempt to take this place, for fear that Gruumsh would send it crashing down upon them and use their bones to heap it up again.

ZORONOR

This bleak bladeling town leans over the cliffs that surround the high plateau of Chernoggar. Although the Stairs of Woe are better known, the bladelings offer another route of ascent. For the right price, individuals who make the trek across the salt flats can purchase a ride on the city's series of elevators to the top. Of course, once within Zoronor, few see any of the rest of the dominion without being in chains. Visitors usually are captured, smuggled across the battlefields, and sold as gladiators to the arenas in Clangor.

TOWER OF THE ADAMANTINE MAGE

Koth-Amar, a wizard of great power, uses this heavily guarded and trapped tower to store the magic and knowledge he has plundered from across the planes.

CRASH PEAKS

Although mountain ranges run across the dominion, the Crash Peaks dwarf all others. These extremely



steep peaks stab high into the orange sky, surrounded and riddled by sheer-sided canyons that gouge deeper into the earth than seems possible. Over the centuries, Chernoggar's two opposing forces have made paths through the wreckage of the dominions' collision. Bridges of swaying chains connect the walls of crevasses, steep trails cut passages through peaks, and networks of dungeons intersect to make cavernous highways through stone. The Crash Peaks are now such a maze of pathways that the one-time barrier has become yet another place where ground changes hands with the fortunes of war.

CLIMBING CAVES

The Climbing Caves is the third-best known ascent into the upper reaches of Chernoggar, consisting of winding and diverse chambers and passages that writhe through the cliffs on the Nishrek side of Chernoggar. Several changing pathways run through them, sometimes opening to exposed ledges on the cliffs. The area is a wilderness inhabited by all manner of savage beasts, but both Gruumsh's armies and Bane's soldiers use the caves to move troops around the outside of the domain, and the forces of one deity or the other sometimes lay claim to a portion of the caves until dislodged by the enemy or by the predations and disasters that take lives amid the shifting stone.

STONE SEA

These vast badlands frequently roil like a storm-tossed ocean, with waves of rising rock tossing splashes of shrapnel into the air. Across them grind the sailing citadels—rocky tors carved into fortresses and piloted across the roiling landscape like ships across an angry sea. Armies of Gruumsh and Bane clash here in a chaotic melee of armadas made from behemoth stones. When the moving castles plow courses that come near one another, soldiers leap free to battle on the quaking ground between them, or board and besiege the enemy fortress. If one side gains the upper hand in this strange war, it sends a sailing citadel to aid a battle elsewhere in the dominion.

LAKES OF LOST HOPE

A sailor in the middle of one of these huge bodies of water could be forgiven for thinking it a sea. Warring fleets and swimming beasts brave the hurricanes, waterspouts, great waves, and whirlpools that frequently rake across the lakes to come to grips with one another or to outflank a land-bound army. Yet even the land around the Lakes of Lost Hope offers no respite from danger, because deadly marshes, rushing rivers, broad quagmires, and waterlogged jungles surround them.

ADVENTURES

Chernoggar is roughly 350 miles across, providing plenty of room for adventures. Ideas for adventures are scattered throughout the descriptions of Chernoggar's major areas, but the topics below might help you present events in a way that makes them feel unique to the warring realm of Bane and Gruumsh.

THEMES

Combat occurs in every adventure, but in Chernoggar, battle or the threat of conflict should be constant. Bane's forces should seek to capture, conscript, or kill the player characters, while Gruumsh's followers try to tear them apart at every opportunity. It should swiftly become obvious which of the two sides the characters can speak to, but it should also be obvious that talk is cheap. What matters in Chernoggar is action, and nothing speaks more loudly than sword and spell.

Mass destruction, slaughter, and chaos are the hallmarks of Gruumsh's forces, while rigid chains of command, duty, strategic planning, and powerful authority mark interactions with Bane's soldiers. There's nothing noble about Gruumsh's savagery. The heroics of Bane's battlesworn are merely brief flashes of light amid the unending darkness of their bloody pragmatism.

Of course, there are many separate armies in Chernoggar. In the course of a few days of travel, the characters might come across a few different armies of Bane and Gruumsh, each with its own leaders. These forces likely communicate with one another, but a bargain struck with one group might not be honored by another. Generals on the same side might be in competition or direct contention. Mercenary bands of monsters and bladelings offer even more unpredictability.

In addition to encounters with scouting parties, spies, and other small groups common to large armed conflicts, the characters should experience massive battles. You can accomplish this by using minions arrayed in screaming hordes or ordered ranks. Alternatively, you could run combats across a large battlefield the same way you might run them in a dungeon. The characters fight a battle, and then the flow of combat gives them choices of the same sort as a left or a right turn in the dungeon: head for the hill where the catapults are, or try to skulk through the brush between the two armies before the battle lines move there. You might also consider using skill challenges to represent the characters' actions in a battlefield conflict. See "Between War and Destruction" (page 56) for one way to handle this.

ENCOUNTERS

Beyond typical combat, the characters might have encounters in which they have a specific goal

aside from winning the fight. Success or failure in such a secondary objective should have a broader implication for a future encounter or for the rest of the adventure. The characters might need to kill a number of minions before a certain number of rounds elapse. They might need to move a particular enemy to a certain point on the battlefield, or capture a certain enemy and then retain that enemy when others attempt a rescue. Or, alternatively, they might need to keep a specific ally alive throughout an encounter.

Skill challenges can be added to combat encounters to give them a military flavor. The characters might need to make skill checks to rally demoralized troops, command the tactics of nearby forces, or repair an important war machine while combat rages.

PLOT IDEAS

Great successes and grave reversals occur each day and night somewhere in the domain, and the characters should be a big factor in what happens in the war around them. Adventure plots should either involve the characters influencing the war directly, or swiftly entangle them in the war, even if their goal is something unrelated.

The characters might come to Chernoggar for a number of reasons, possibly including one or more of these.

- ◆ Pursue someone hoping (foolishly?) to hide in the chaos of Chernoggar.
- ◆ Stop someone who has come to Chernoggar to gain an army or a weapon for conflict elsewhere.
- ◆ Gain a great weapon needed to slay a primordial, perhaps by stealing it from Bane.
- ◆ Claim a warship or a sailing citadel for their use.
- ◆ Help Gruumsh or Bane win the war, upsetting the status quo of the deities.
- ◆ Reawaken the spirit of Tuern, which is rumored to be "slumbering" as a flame trapped in the shape of an axe.
- ◆ Gain the service of a famous exalted general as the leader of a coming war.
- ◆ Convince followers of Gruumsh and Bane to turn their fury upon a common enemy.

MONSTERS AND NPCs

The characters might face leftover servants of Tuern (fiery and militaristic creatures such as salamanders or efreet), but most of Chernoggar should be filled by bladelings, followers of the two deities, or monsters the two forces brought there to fight their battles. The breeding pits of goblinoid battlesworn offer a potentially limitless variety of creatures the characters might face, either as part of one of the armies or as small groups roaming the dominion. Angels, devils, and maruts might be found on both sides.

Chapter 4 provides statistics for battlesworn of both deities and for exarchs of Gruumsh. For exarchs of Bane, see “Deities and Demigods: Bane” in *Dragon* #372 at www.dndinsider.com.

BETWEEN WAR AND DESTRUCTION

This skill challenge represents the characters attempting to move about in an active war zone in Chernoggar. Rather than a single skill challenge for one trip across a battlefield, this skill challenge should be used several times during the course of an adventure whenever the characters need to move through battlefields where fighting is taking place. You can use it as an abstract representation of the characters’ movement from important battle to important battle in a conflict in which they participate, or you can use it to represent their attempts to avoid being drawn into a war that rages around them as they pursue their own concerns.

Level: 25 (XP 35,000).

Complexity: 5 (12 successes before 3 failures).

Segments: Unlike other skill challenges, this skill challenge has different components each time you use it. Whenever you start the skill challenge, choose three skill challenge segments from the eight described below. Each segment represents a scene or smaller challenge within the context of the larger skill challenge. That segment introduces the scene currently taking place within the skill challenge.

The characters accrue successes and failures as is normal in a skill challenge. If they accrue a total of 3 failures across all segments they have attempted, they fail the skill challenge. If the characters earn 4 successes in each of the three segments, they succeed on the skill challenge. The end result is still a skill challenge requiring 12 successes before 3 failures, but the successes are distributed over three segments.

The time frame for skill checks in any of the segments is highly variable. The characters might be involved in other dealings that make it difficult for them to progress in the challenge more often than once an hour (for instance), or they might be making checks in rapid succession (perhaps once per minute) if nothing else is occupying their attention.

Each segment is tied to a specific area on the battlefields of Chernoggar. You can choose segments that come from the same area, or each segment can come from a different area. The areas are:

Fields of the Dead: Each of these areas is a wasteland of heaped bodies and muddy hills. The battle has largely left the area, but small skirmishes frequently erupt between scavenging units. Troops are wary of conflict here because they lack support, making social solutions to problems simpler, but the soldiers don’t give their trust easily.

Wracking Landscape: Gruumsh’s forces have gained the upper hand in these areas, and the broken ground is wracked by tumultuous weather, quakes, landslides, and volcanic activity. Bane’s forces are on the lookout for allies, while Gruumsh’s forces are difficult to impress. The environment makes movement and understanding the battlefield difficult.

Grip of Iron: Bane’s forces have established a strong presence in these areas, putting Gruumsh’s army on the run and taming the landscape. Bane’s camp is wary of trickery, while Gruumsh’s followers seek easy victories.

Battlefield in Flux: These areas are in near-constant conflict, as the two armies contest the field. Neither side welcomes strangers, but the chaos of the conflict provides opportunities for either strategy or stealth.

Success: Each time the characters gain 4 successes in a segment, they move on to the next one. If they complete three segments successfully, the skill challenge ends and the characters reach their destination safely.

Failure: Whenever the characters accrue their third failure in the skill challenge, the segment they are engaged in at the time determines the failure condition. See each segment for a description of its failure condition.

FIELDS OF THE DEAD: BANESWORN

The characters encounter several lost Banesworn (page 134). They assume the characters are allies and ask for directions back to their unit. If the characters seek to properly direct the Banesworn, they can attempt to set them on the path they want. Alternatively, the characters can attempt to divert the Banesworn toward Gruumsh’s forces.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Nature.

Bluff (DC 17): The character tricks the Banesworn into going even farther off course, convincing them that they are receiving good directions, when in reality the directions will lead them to the battlesworn of Gruumsh.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character gives the Banesworn good advice, convincing them to either follow the right path back to their encampment or to leave the battle altogether, preserving their own lives by refusing to fight.

Intimidate (DC 26): The character runs off the Banesworn, threatening them with death and leaving them with no direction as to how to proceed.

Nature (DC 17): The character discerns the quickest path for the Banesworn to return to their companions’ camp, or the most circuitous one to delay them for a good deal of time.

Failure: Any characters who have an action point lose that action point.

FIELDS OF THE DEAD:

FALLEN LEADERS

The characters encounter a wounded leader of one side or the other (your choice) trapped beneath a dead mount or war machine. They can free the leader or trick the leader into giving them directions in exchange for the (presumably false) promise of aid.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Endurance, Insight.

Athletics (DC 26): The character pries the leader out from under the obstruction.

Bluff or Diplomacy (DC 26): The character convinces the leader to give the information the party needs to move on in exchange for freeing him or her.

Endurance (DC 17): The character picks up and holds the object pinning the leader, lifting it slowly to minimize any wounds the leader might have sustained.

Insight (DC 26): The character figures out from which direction the leader was riding when he or she was ambushed, cluing the characters in to the location of other, similar forces in the vicinity.

Failure: Each of the characters loses a healing surge.

WRACKING LANDSCAPE:

ANGELIC SPIES

An angelic spy for Gruumsh's forces notices and confronts the characters. They can attempt to talk the angel into leaving them to their own business or try to convince the angel to switch sides in the conflict.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Religion.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character reasons with the angel, convincing it that joining the characters is in its best interest, or perhaps to work as a double agent.

History (DC 17): The character determines something about either this particular angelic spy or the past deeds of a famous angelic spy, using that knowledge to convince the angel that other angels in the past have not been so strict in their duties.

Intimidate (DC 31): The character convinces the angel that if it reports on the party to its master, bad things will happen—both to the angel and to its master.

Religion (DC 17): The character determines some of the habits and mannerisms that this particular angel is likely to have and to what kind of arguments it would be more likely to listen.

Failure: The characters take a -5 penalty to Charisma-based skill checks until they take an extended rest.

WRACKING LANDSCAPE:

BEST-LAID PLANS

The characters learn of a suicidal strategy by the followers of Gruumsh, either by finding the plans on a dead soldier or overhearing the planning. The plan is crazed and destined to fail, so informing the followers of Bane does nothing. The characters can decide to intervene, attempting to dissuade the foolhardy soldiers and providing an alternative, or they can warn the Banesworn about the ambush and make it a total rout.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Diplomacy, Insight, Perception.

Athletics (DC 31): The character races ahead to the farthest point in the battle plan's path, warning the defenders against the impending attack.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character convinces the battlesworn of Gruumsh that their plan is doomed to failure and, possibly, that the plan the characters have put together would work better.

Insight (DC 17): The character determines the best way to modify the battle plan to cause it to either fail more spectacularly, reducing the number of lives lost, or to succeed.

Perception (DC 26): The character searches for remnants from past battles that can be used by one side or the other during the attack, such as siege weapons buried in the mud or naturally occurring barricades.

Failure: Any characters who have an action point lose that action point.

GRIP OF IRON: AMBUSHED

The characters are surrounded by Bane's forces, but they notice Gruumsh's battlesworn are ready to ambush their erstwhile captors. They must either convince the Banesworn of the danger or hide their knowledge and distract them from the surprise attack.

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Insight, Stealth.

Bluff (DC 31): The character hides his or her knowledge of the impending ambush, ensuring that the Banesworn are wiped out.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character convinces the Banesworn to trust the party, warning them of the ambush in time to turn the tide.

Insight (DC 26): The character discerns who might come out on top of the eventual ambush, which will inform the party on which side to support.

Stealth (DC 26): The character helps the group hide from both forces, making sure that neither group of battlesworn sees them.

Failure: Each of the characters takes damage equal to his or her bloodied value from being caught in the middle during the ensuing melee.

GRIP OF IRON: MOVE THAT ARTILLERY!

The characters encounter a siege machine or an artillery piece stuck in the mud and entangled in brush. They can help to free it for the followers of Bane or try to seize the weapon for themselves.

Primary Skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Heal.

Athletics (DC 31): The character physically moves the large piece of artillery, using his or her strength to force it out of the mud.

Dungeoneering (DC 26): The character determines the best way to disassemble and reassemble the artillery, as is done with dungeon traps, to move it more easily.

Endurance (DC 17): The character rocks the siege weapon back and forth to remove it from the entangling brush, taking a slow and steady approach to freeing the device.

Heal (DC 17): The character provides first aid and revitalizing assistance to the others who are trying to extricate the artillery, giving them more energy for their task.

Failure: Each of the characters loses a healing surge from exhaustion.

BATTLEFIELD IN FLUX: BLADELING MERCENARIES

The characters encounter a troop of bladeling mercenaries fleeing the battle, and not far off they can see a general of Bane surveying the battle from a high promontory. The characters can call out to the general about the deserters or keep quiet. If they call out, the bladelings are captured, and the characters might gain information from the general.

Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Nature, Perception, Stealth.

Diplomacy (DC 26): The character convinces the general to pursue the bladelings, ensuring that they are captured quickly.

Nature (DC 17): The character finds the fastest route by which to cut off the bladelings' escape, giving the Banesworn an edge in the pursuit.

Perception (DC 26): The character acts as a lookout or an advance scout, physically following the tracks left behind by the bladelings to ensure their capture.

Stealth (DC 31): The character sneaks up on the bladelings, forcing them to turn back toward the general's forces.

Failure: The characters do not count this encounter toward their milestones for the day.

BATTLEFIELD IN FLUX: CROSSFIRE!

The characters are caught in a crossfire. A rain of arrows or a blast of magic affects them as they take

cover and escape the area, requiring them to flee the area quickly.

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Arcana, Insight, Perception.

Acrobatics (DC 26): The character physically evades the incoming missiles, dodging nimbly out of the way.

Arcana (DC 26): The character determines the nature of the spells (if any) being used to create the bombardment, using that knowledge to predict attack patterns.

Insight (DC 17): The character predicts where the heaviest density of incoming projectiles is to be found and evades those areas.

Perception (DC 31): The character watches the skies for incoming missiles, dodging them reactively.

Failure: Each of the characters takes damage equal to his or her bloodied value from narrow escapes and glancing blows.

THE WAR EXPANDS

Even if the characters never visit the war in Chernoggar, the war might come to them, as the conflict between Gruumsh and Bane spirals out from the contested dominion. Despite the desperate battles fought in Chernoggar, Bane's forces periodically choose to conquer astral motes, border islands, and sections of the shattered dominions far from his kingdom. Bane's battlesworn cast off for distant battlefields in astral armadas, heedless of the dangers to their immortal souls if they die far from their deity's dominion. Furious at being ignored, elements of Gruumsh's hordes sometimes follow Bane's ships in commandeered or cobbled-together skiffs or, more rarely, in dominion ships.

The increasing intensity of the war beyond Chernoggar's borders is wreaking havoc on astral motes and border islands occupied temporarily or permanently by Bane's forces. Not only must the denizens of those places contend with would-be conquerors, but after the devastation of battle and the occupation by their new masters, they must ally with their occupiers to defend themselves from an inevitable assault by the crazed hordes of Gruumsh.

Bane's battlesworn regularly command and serve as the rank and file of these forces despite the fact that their deaths so far afield will result in the dissolution of their souls. The permanent loss of any of Bane's battlesworn presents a threat to Bane's power, but he tends to lose fewer battlesworn than Gruumsh in these wide-ranging skirmishes. Whether these assaults represent true attempts at conquest or training exercises for a future battle, none but Bane can say.

Discussed below are a few ways in which the ongoing conflict might crop up in your campaign.

Gruumsh's Faithful: An army of devils has claimed a corrupt city in the world, just as the devils

did in the last days of Bael Turath. The characters have unwelcome allies in their attempt to fight the devils: an army of orcs and other monstrous faithful of Gruumsh. A number of the devils are secretly allied with Bane, and the worshipers of Gruumsh received divine visions of their deity's enemies. Although the orcs are a source of possible aid against the devils, they aren't likely to spare any of the innocent citizens.

Sprung Traps: The battlesworn of Bane have come and gone from Kalandurren (page 114), but they left traps behind for Gruumsh's allies. Now the characters must contend with both the native dangers of that shattered dominion and those imposed by Bane's faithful. When the savage foes of Bane arrive, the characters have the opportunity to turn the traps upon them.

Up the Ante: While the characters are exploring the white deserts of Shom (page 119), the forces of Bane arrive to negotiate for aid from the maruts. While there, those forces don't mind press-ganging the characters, particularly if they can be used as a bargaining chip with the guardian maruts the characters have been fighting.

Unwanted Company: Fresh from crushing a recruiting expedition by Bane's forces, Gruumsh's followers wreck their ship near Bentsword in the Foothills of Celestia (page 48). They must be defeated before Bane's armies arrive and use the orcs' continued presence as an excuse to launch a "pacifying mission."

Servants of the Gods: In a strange twist of the mirrorlike nature of the Shadowfell, the souls of those faithful to Bane and Gruumsh begin fighting their deities' war before they reach the Astral Sea. Although few are faithful enough to enter their deities' dominion, the undead think they can earn their places by their acts of faith in the afterlife. Now a host of undead that are faithful to Bane makes conquests in his name while a horde of undead that honor Gruumsh chase after them. Both are pursued by agents of the Raven Queen that seek to reclaim these wayward souls. All of this would likely be beyond the characters' concern, but the Bane-worshiping undead have set their sights on conquest in the world as their tribute.

Misguided Hunters: Maglubiyet, exarch of Bane, has ordered a Great Hunt to collect a huge quantity of strange beasts for the breeding pits, gladiatorial arenas, and battlefields of Chernoggar. Now goblin battlesworn have set out all over the planes in raiding parties to capture monsters for their lord and leader. A particularly crazed and ambitious crew seeks to awaken and subdue a bestial primordial. Gruumsh's followers follow behind secretly, in hopes of freeing the primordial to cause more havoc in Bane's camp.

THE SHRAPNELS: CHERNOGGAR'S ISLANDS

As with other astral dominions, islands crowd around Chernoggar. Thrust outward from the collision of the two deities' realms, these massive astral isles hurtle around Chernoggar in a slow yet dangerous orbital storm. The Shrapnel Islands spin through the Astral Sea in a variety of trajectories, sometimes colliding and fusing together in a reenactment of the dominion's creation and other times ricocheting off one another into new trajectories.

The Shrapnels do not align with the astral horizon, and each island has its own gravity relative to that isle's surface. Those on the surface of an island cannot feel it moving on its orbital path as it careens about Chernoggar. Yet anyone looking up from one of the Shrapnels can see the rusty glow from Chernoggar's color veil as the veil passes over or under the island and can watch other islands whirl overhead in deceptively graceful arcs. With miles of distance between their paths, other islands appear as specks passing slowly overhead.

From time to time, two of the Shrapnel Islands collide. The outcome of that collision depends on the size, speed, and composition of the bodies involved. In general, the larger of the two islands survives such a clash, absorbing the smaller islands within itself or deflecting it away. At times, however, a smaller island smashes into a weak point on a larger one, slicing away a section of it or bursting it apart to form more Shrapnels.

The Shrapnels frequently play host to the predations of monsters such as astral stalkers (*Monster Manual*, page 10), astral dreadnoughts (*Manual of the Planes*, page 115), primordial colossi (*Monster Manual* 2, page 37), and other abominations. These attacks might be due to the influence of Gruumsh, and they seem to form a pattern of aggression against any settlement or army on the islands that grows too large. Warlords among the Shrapnels come and go, but any who gain enough influence to command more than a few hundred troops are beset by mass desertions or find their forces split by mutiny for fear of attracting the attentions of a behemoth terror.

Of course, the orbital swarm of border islands also means that outsiders who are randomly teleported away from Chernoggar when they try to cross its color veil often find themselves near one or more of the Shrapnels rather than floating in the empty astral space above or below other divine dominions.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

The Shrapnels are home to the souls of some of the most destructive and domineering individuals throughout the planes. Through accidents of fate, these spirits pass through the Shadowfell and end

up among the Shrapnels instead of on Chernoggar or at their other rightful destinations. Many are the faithful of Gruumsh and Bane, but numerous other outsiders begin their second life in the Shrapnels. Some even survive and stay.

Life in the Shrapnels is tough and risky. Charismatic or intimidating individuals gather allies about themselves and attempt to make small gains that make life more comfortable, but any grand plans are doomed due to internal strife or external disasters. No one caught in the Shrapnel Islands is an optimist. Bladelings, githyanki, renegade angels and devils, and pirates and mercenaries of all sorts live among the Shrapnels, in addition to outsiders. Nothing but sword or spell imposes order upon these islands. The dangerous nature of the Shrapnels and their lawlessness makes them an opportune hideout for many.

Bane and Gruumsh don't pay attention to the border wars in the Shrapnels. An armada from Chernoggar might stop off to press-gang individuals or to hire mercenaries for a venture into realms beyond, but it's plain to all that the angels and the battlesworn of Chernoggar consider these bit players nothing other than fodder. The followers of other deities occasionally scout the area for outsiders that follow neither Bane nor Gruumsh and need a ride to an archipelago away from the gods of war, but flying into Bane's territory is risky business.

NAVIGATING THE SHRAPNELS

Fortunately for astral travelers, navigating through the Shrapnels isn't as dangerous as living on them. The distance between islands is large enough that posted sentinels can watch for oncoming isles and pilot around them. And if a traveler approaches too rapidly, there is still enough time to orient to an island's gravity and avoid an upended fall to the island's surface.

The dangerous moments occur when something blocks vision of a moving island. Such an event can happen when a traveler is leaving or arriving at an island, or when astral storms or other phenomena obscure sight. In such situations, a ship or a traveler can suddenly enter the gravity field of an island when improperly oriented. Flying creatures rarely have difficulty; either they right themselves and fly in to land, or they soar away from the island. Astral vessels that are improperly oriented immediately go out of control and crash if the crew cannot remain in the vessel and right it. Swimming creatures and other nonflyers fall a long distance (usually to their deaths).

Inhabitants of the Shrapnels thus rarely attempt to leave their islands unless provided with a vessel or flying mount. Some take the risk when a collision can be predicted, hoping to exchange certain death by crushing for the mere mortal peril of the resultant explosion, or when another Shrapnel looks like it is

approaching close enough that it's worth the risk of going out to wait along the orbital path.

MAJOR AREAS

A variable number of islands circulate in orbit around Chernoggar, as the Shrapnels combine and explode. Rather than being barren shards of rock, however, the Shrapnels swiftly rejuvenate, even after destruction. Forests reclaim land occupied by craters, rivers carve new routes, and blood-soaked souls from across the planes replenish those lost to calamity.

The Shrapnels consist of about two hundred islands at any given time, and this variety offers plenty of space for you to devise your own Shrapnel Island locations. An island might be in such an odd orbit that it hasn't come near other islands for centuries, while another one might be regularly threatened with collision. Neither Bane nor Gruumsh is capable of using magic and battlesworn to expand Chernoggar by bringing any of these chaotically orbiting islands into the dominion.

A few of the islands that have lasted long enough to become known to travelers are described below.

ISLE OF RAGE

Inhabitants of the other islands pray to whatever deity hears them in hopes of avoiding a collision with the dreaded Isle of Rage. This volcanic island whirls erratically about Chernoggar faster than any other island, trailing a plume of cinders and smoke like a fiery comet. It smashes through smaller Shrapnels and scrapes across larger islands, all the while belching lava and toxic clouds. Crazy outsiders of fire from all over the planes inhabit the isle, and they tumble out of their home like a pyroclastic flow to burn and slay whatever they encounter. Only an insane person or an adventurer would intentionally set foot on the Isle of Rage. Of course, the island's mythological history provides incentive for both kinds of visitors. The Isle of Rage is rumored to be the spot where Bane slew the fire god Tuern, and it was cast off from the dominion when Gruumsh crashed his realm into Bane's conquered lands. Tuern's still-hot blood fuels the isle's volcano.

REAVERS' HAVEN

The scarred island of Reavers' Haven presents an imposing sight. It looks like a massive, irregular block of stone marbled by thick veins of pure iron that glint in the orange glow of Chernoggar's color veil. The plentiful iron has brought pirates, freebooters, and mercenaries to the place, granting it its name. Mortal, outsider, and immortal reavers live in fortified caverns that pockmark the surface of Reavers' Haven. A huge variety of independent groups use the caves, and they battle over resources, knowledge, and employment.

Weak-looking vessels can expect hostility, intimidation, or extortion, but travelers who give evidence of their power can hire crew or trade for goods or repairs in the raucous port caves. The light from the Astral Sea doesn't shine very deeply into the caves, and the reavers rarely travel farther down than the light goes. Danger dwells in the depths of their haven—danger that the reavers would prefer to leave in the dark.

GNASHING TEETH

Astral travelers call three of the Shrapnels the Gnashing Teeth because as they travel together in their shared orbit, they spin around one another in unpredictable eddies that slam them together and rip them apart. Once a single island used as a military outpost by the forces of Bane, the military settlement grew large despite repeated attacks by monsters. It was abandoned after another island burst through it, causing it to break up. Now the remaining three islands serve as a home to factions of bladelings and outsiders battling for control. The war takes place on the three fronts of the islands, periodically changing in great sweeps as the Gnashing Teeth collide or draw apart. Bladelings and githyanki fight for the islands specifically because the defenses left by Bane's battlesworn are strong enough to defend against all threats, making the Gnashing Teeth an excellent base of operations near Chernoggar.

RIMEVAL

The polar opposite of the Isle of Rage, Rimeval is dominated by glacier-shrouded peaks. A ceaseless blizzard swirls over the center of the island, forever feeding the press of ice that moves in a crushing creep or a sudden avalanche to the edges of the isle. At the verges of Rimeval, the massive glaciers constantly cleave off into icebergs that guard its shores before floating free to become part of the Shrapnels. The bitter souls cursed by happenstance to freeze in Rimeval take refuge in ice tunnels in the glaciers, eking out a desperate existence. No one would remember Rimeval as anything other than a place to be avoided, yet a foolhardy few who braved the cold death that awaited them in Rimeval returned with astral diamonds and strange treasures frozen in the ice since ancient days. The glaciers act like a planar depository for things cursed to be lost. They fall from the storm to be buried by snow and then ground down by the weight of the ages, gradually compressing over time to form astral diamonds.

HESTAVAR

Floating atop gold and silver clouds, Hestavar showcases the best and brightest in the world of the deities. Fantastically wealthy and bright with innovation and design, Hestavar functions as a meeting point and a trading zone for the various creatures of the Astral Sea, including exalted from other dominions, maruts, visitors from the world and its echoes, and even the occasional githyanki or devil protected by diplomatic promises of good behavior.

Pale clouds of bright metallic hues look down on Hestavar. The first glimpse of the Bright City that visitors get is of a terraced city thirty miles wide and just as high, held aloft on a cascade of earthmotes that drift in set patterns or remain in place if they are locked in by silver bridges.

Astral vessels that enter the cloud veil emerge a few minutes later sailing on the surface of a great lagoon that occupies the lower third of the dominion. Travelers that fly or swim through the clouds come out above one of the sandbars that dot the lagoon, perhaps within easy reach of a home or a palace built in the lagoon, or perhaps out among the fishing boats.

It is always the height of daytime in Hestavar, though the sun walks the city as a deity instead of waiting in the sky. The clouds above the dominion serve to reflect Pelor's glory, shedding brilliant radiance from overhead. Sometimes the clouds darken to a silvery cast, but usually they shimmer gold.

Despite its problems and its occasionally haughty citizens, Hestavar remains a city of marvels. Many of these, as well as some of its dangers, have been covered in other sources. The following section focuses on the broad elements of the deities' plans as they might intersect with the characters' adventures.

GODS OF HESTAVAR

As discussed in Chapter 1, each of the deities spends a great deal of time and effort sustaining his or her dominion and projecting his or her divine power through the world and its echoes. Over the centuries, if the deities carefully marshal their power, they can gather the resources to undertake great new projects of creation, such as Moradin with his massive mythological weapons, Gruumsh's invasion of Chernoggar, and in a fashion, Arvandor's Glorious Hunt. In this respect, Erathis is the most active of the three gods that reside in Hestavar, but Pelor and Ioun also have plans of their own.

ERATHIS'S MISSION

Of all the deities, Erathis felt the destruction of the Lattice of Heaven most keenly. Like Moradin (and to a lesser extent, Corellon), she had been integral to its creation. Unlike Moradin, Erathis hoped that the



communication and immediate transportation the Lattice would have fostered might create a new type of community among the deities, turning what had resembled a widely scattered group of city-states into a single densely populated and integrated nation. As the god of civilization, Erathis understood that she would play a major role in an integrated heaven, even if other deities hadn't fully realized the implications of the Lattice.

Now the Lattice is gone. Its remaining vestiges are fragments of their former glory, such as color veils around the dominions, color strands, and the so-called gambler strands that transport those who enter them to a seemingly random location, which was originally a fixed point on the Lattice. Looking at the world of mortals and seeing how monstrous tides of barbarism and chaos nearly outnumber the spheres of progress and civilization, Erathis has decided that the world cannot be reshaped until the Plane Above is rebuilt. She still supports her worshipers as they seek to hold back the tribes of ignorance and the hordes of destruction, but she no longer personally believes that her worshipers and others who believe in their cause will be able to remake the world until they remake the Lattice.

In Erathis's mind, the original plan for a unified heaven is lost. Too many fragments have been destroyed or reconstituted in monstrous configurations. So she has designed a new plan to remake heaven, using pieces of the existing Lattice.

ERATHIS'S PLAN TO REMAKE HEAVEN

First, to recreate a new Lattice of Heaven, Erathis must learn to create everything that can be created. She must learn, understand, and put to use the current laws of creation, so that the final laws of creation can be codified and improved. The exalted of Hestavar

are engaged in a fever of invention and craftsmanship known as the Game of Making. All types of creation can be part of the Game of Making. Poetry, oratory, watercolor, tea ceremony, combat magic, invention, siege work, dance, creating new rituals, creating new life—all these forms of creation are of utmost importance to Erathis's mission. The exalted of Erathis do not see how these disparate elements come together to build a vision that can restore the universe, but they trust their deity to see to that. In turn, Erathis encourages them to do their best, inviting all the exalted of Hestavar, not just her own, to participate in the Game.

Second, the simplest and most direct approach to creating a new Lattice is to start by restoring the shattered dominions that once had a deity, or deities, but are now wastelands populated by monsters and constructs. Shom and Kalandurren are the first targets of Erathis's restoration. Pandemonium and Pluton will follow, though both those dominions are complicated by the influence of their original deities. Just as is anything connected with chaos-crazed Tharizdun, Pandemonium is dangerous; and like anything associated with the original death god, Nerull, action in Pluton is likely to irk the Raven Queen.

Third, new gods must be installed in the restored dominions. As set forth in Chapter 3, even restoring Shom and Kalandurren is going to be a long and difficult task. And in the end, pacifying, restoring, and colonizing the dominions won't be enough—each restored dominion will need a new deity. In the case of Shom, Erathis hopes that Ioun might one day be convinced to accept the dominion that she was unwilling to take earlier in the history of the cosmos. But worthy candidates for Kalandurren, much less Pandemonium and Pluton, are nowhere in sight, since Erathis has no desire to leave Hestavar.

CHARACTER INVOLVEMENT

Of all the current divine plans, Erathis's is the most far-ranging and the most likely to involve the characters at some point in their paragon and epic careers.

The Game of Making might not be adventurous enough to be a lifestyle for most characters, but occasional involvement with the Game should interest any creative, ambitious, or magic-hungry group. If the characters don't go looking for the Game of Making, it's likely that Erathis's agents will try to enlist their unique skills, asking the characters to come to Hestavar to demonstrate their abilities in Erathis's temple.

Simultaneously, the dark side of the Game of Making might turn the characters against Erathis. Erathis can't trust the exalted of Hestavar to conduct the worst experiments her project requires. She has to subcontract. Erathis's subcontractors could turn out to be the characters' worst enemies or creatures associated with Vecna. Since the worst experiments can't be conducted in Hestavar, or even in the dominion's Daybreak Islands, Erathis sends small groups far out into the Astral Sea. Some are searching for pieces of shattered dominions. Others are looking for sites to conduct experiments. The characters might thwart what appear to be the actions of slavers and evil magicians, only to realize later that they had come up against servitors of Erathis.

On a more positive note, Erathis would probably be happy to sponsor a group of characters intent on pacifying (and yes, looting) one of the shattered dominions, such as Kalandurren. Erathis is a pragmatic deity willing to recruit almost any heroes, regardless of past differences, as long as she thinks she can trust them once they have joined her cause.

The final hurdle in reestablishing the shattered dominions promises to be a high one. Finding a new deity isn't easy, and that might be where the characters come in. As individuals with mighty epic destinies, one or more of the characters, possibly as a group, might impress Erathis as the potential new deity or deities of a troubled dominion. Given that

Erathis can't be fully in control of the mechanisms she is putting into place, the characters might make themselves the deities of the dominions without her full approval. For dramatic purposes, you'll probably want to marry this plotline to a terrible enemy's attempt to take advantage of the chance for apotheosis, forcing the characters to become deities instead.

PELOR'S VIGILS

Pelor, or at least one of his most magnificent aspects, holds court in the radiant palace of Aurosion. Though he approves of Erathis's mission in its general outlines, he considers the plan still in its early days and has promised to contribute with his magic when the plan is closer to fruition and when divine dominions are waiting to be reignited. To this end, Pelor bides his time, gathering strength for the great rituals ahead.

Pelor's patience has another purpose. He understands that if the Game of Making is to run as Erathis desires, it will eventually have to experiment with twisted creation and evil consequences. Erathis has delayed or hidden such work, and Pelor reserves his full approval and magical support until Erathis makes the extent of such research clear. By making his support conditional, Pelor might succeed in restraining the worst of Erathis's machinations, or perhaps not.

As well as devoting a great deal of his attention to the mortal world, Pelor has a post within Hestavar that is secret to all but the other deities of the dominion and a few of their exarchs. The largest fragments of the shattered Living Gate (see the sidebar), which provided the Far Realm's first entry into the Astral Sea, are locked within Hestavar's Sun of Suns, a cosmic orb guarded by Pelor deep within the mote that contains his palace. The fragments cannot be destroyed. However, as long as they are locked within the aspect of Pelor that functions as an underground sun, Pelor believes that the fragments cannot be accessed, detected, or manipulated, at least not by anyone other than Ioun, who was there when Pelor first saw the Living Gate and who helps shield the Sun of Suns' secrets.

THE LIVING GATE

Three great enemies of the Far Realm have strong links to the original Living Gate, its current disposition, and its eventual fate. The shardminds, the githyanki, and the gods all agree that the Far Realm broke into the cosmos as a consequence of the destruction of the Living Gate. What these groups cannot agree on is the purpose of the gate's fragments and whether rebuilding the gate would help repel the Far Realm.

The githyanki have no intention of re-forming the Living Gate. Instead they use its fragments as weapons against the aberrants, forging their distinctive silver swords (page 95) around slivers of the original gate. Meanwhile, the shardminds consider themselves to be energy creations

of another type of fragment of the Gate. The three major shardmind philosophies (*Player's Handbook 3*, page 13) agree that the way to seal the Far Realm away forever is to rebuild the Living Gate. Neither the githyanki nor Pelor share this view. In fact, Pelor secretly preserves the largest fragments of the Living Gate within his inner sun beneath Hestavar. Is Pelor certain that rebuilding the gate would be a mistake, or is he hoping to use the fragments of the gate to one day reclaim his home dominion, lost during the Far Realm's original incursion? Ioun might know; she simultaneously preserves the secrets of Pelor's inner sun and encourages the shardminds within Hestavar who seek to build an entirely new Living Gate.

IOUN'S POISE

By choice, Ioun remains something of an outsider in Hestavar. She keeps to her tower of Kerith-Ald, observing long-ago events, distant events, and events that have not yet come to pass. Her exalted aid those of Erathis in the Game of Making or serve their deity in her temples. Though Pelor controls the element of time, some have observed that Ioun seems to be the god of timing. She does not act often, but when she does, she is decisive and sure.

In your campaign, feel free to use Ioun as a wild card, an unaligned god who sees farther than other deities and who might act swiftly and decisively when everyone else has been lulled into regarding her long centuries of relative inactivity as a cosmic constant instead of a short pause to gain perspective.

As discussed in the section on Shom (page 119), the moment Ioun might be waiting for will shape the fate of that shattered dominion.

THE DAYBREAK ISLANDS: HESTAVAR'S ARCHIPELAGO

Hestavar's border islands are oriented toward the perpetual slanting light from the clouds above the dominion. The Daybreaks received their name because the light slants in on them as if the sun were just rising. On the islands most distant from Hestavar, it's difficult to shake the impression that the sun is setting instead.

The Daybreaks are blessed with wealth and an expansive society. Secondhand products of Hestavar's Game of Making provide inhabitants with a standard of living that rivals anything found in the world of mortals. Ongoing trade between Hestavar and the rest of the Astral Sea provides outsiders with employment as traders and crew members of astral vessels.

The relatively rich afterlife that the Daybreaks promise paints the isles as a rich target. The githyanki seldom attack the islands directly, but they happily prey on vessels that head out of the Daybreaks to other dominions. Similarly, agents of Bane, the Nine Hells, and other dread powers use the Daybreak Islands as a haven that is both profitable and comfortable to hide within. Plots against Hestavar, and indeed against the rest of the cosmos, often originate in the cities and towns of the Daybreaks.

MAJOR AREAS

Two main types of islands exist in the Daybreaks: heavily populated urban areas that bear the name of the city or town that entirely covers the island, and unpopulated wastelands.

LUETHVAR

Luethvar is a neutral trading zone where all are welcome, as long as they keep the peace. Squadrons of

hippogriff knights run by the enterprising High Minister Kemuel make an obvious show of power, flying circuits around nearby islands. Marut mercenaries quell serious outbreaks of violence.

Anything can be found in Luethvar, though the correct word should probably be "purchased." The outsiders of Luethvar still venerate the deities, but they also know that coin and treasure will see them through the afterlife, and the only limit on commerce in the city is that slave trading must take place elsewhere. You can have slaves in Luethvar, and you can make deals to purchase slaves in Luethvar, but it's poor form and a bad idea to finish the deal in a city so close to Pelor's high palace. One possible exception to the slavery rule is that no one can be certain what goes on in the city's strangest temple, a public place of worship to Vecna that spares a few niches for worship of other evil deities such as Zehir and Torog.

SCAR

A densely forested isle known as a bad place to stumble onto, Scar is home to all sorts of twisted creatures, the results of magical and alchemical experimentation. The only sign of civilization is the Tower of Broken Men at Scar's center, occupied by a mad artificer named Cassalanter Vegna. A secret known to few is that the meticulous Cassalanter is perfectly in control of his wits. He is a devoted servant of Erathis, and his broken people and sculpted animals are part of his contribution to the Game of Making.

SHINE POINT

This small island on the far side of the Daybreaks, where dawn turns to twilight, holds a strange rock lighthouse. The "keeper" of the lighthouse is not mortal. One by one, angels take it in turn to spend a season, a year, or a decade within the lighthouse, sending their inner illumination outward through a prism made of force, rather than anything physical. Some say the angels are serving penance. Others say they are taking a vacation.

THE TOWNSHIPS

Two dozen separate islands with names such as Morrow Town, Sun Town, Barter Point, and Middletown form a collective known as the Townships. Each little island town has its own distinctive emblem for its trading vessels, which ply the waters between the Daybreaks and Hestavar, although some go farther afield. If outsiders could have children, these little sea towns would seem like happy communities from the mortal world. As it is, children do appear, either being raised by their mortal parents or, as sometimes happens, having been bought or shipped in from other mortal realms. Outsiders who become foster parents consider themselves blessed. It's unclear whether this is a heartwarming occurrence, or something more sinister involving slave trading and githyanki piracy.

THE NINE HELLS

Perhaps no dominion is better known, or more feared by mortals, than the Nine Hells. And between Asmodeus's schemes and the depredations of its residents, this infamy is well earned.

WELCOME TO HELL

A shimmering veil of red smoke parts, leaving your ship far above a barren, fire-blackened wasteland. Instantly, you are falling, much like the rebellious angels fell, and a lake of fire rushes toward you trailing smoke. This is the descent into the Nine Hells—a descent from which few return, let alone repeat—and your torments are only just beginning.

Planar adventurers who fall to this blasted surface can expect a harsh, brutal ruin far beyond anything

they know—and this is merely Avernus, the first of the Nine Hells. The deeper layers are deadlier.

A campaign to destroy devils and free the souls trapped in hell is the most straightforward path to lead characters into the Nine Hells, but such a goal is not at all easy to accomplish. The devils are entrenched, organized, and very numerous. Even though they indulge in jealousies and rivalries, they mobilize quickly to counter a common threat (such as a group of intrusive adventurers). For all but the most powerful adventurers, the key to surviving the Hells is to keep a low profile and muster through the schemes of the damned.

ASMODEUS'S FALL AND THE FOUNDATION OF HELL

Long ago, Asmodeus was a great general in the army of a deity of law and good who ruled the dominion of Baator. By rights, this myth should start with the name of this master, the god who had originally elevated Asmodeus as an exarch. But the god's name is lost; Asmodeus used his magic and influence to make sure that the original god of Baator is remembered only as "He Who Was," an awkward name for an awkward god.

Asmodeus was the most powerful warrior exarch in service to his god, but over time Asmodeus's methods became increasingly brutal. After another massacre in which innocents had fallen alongside enemies, there was a falling-out between Asmodeus and He Who Was. Asmodeus warned that relieving him of his duties would prove his master's undoing, but the god of Baator was resolute: Asmodeus was thrown from his master's palace along with all those who had followed in his brutal wake. At one stroke, the realm's greatest warrior and his army were

THE NINE HELLS— A DM'S TOOLBOX

Manual of the Planes offers an effective layer-by-layer travelogue of the Nine Hells. That information is not repeated here. Instead, this section begins with information on the devils' motivations and on running adventures in the Hells. It's followed by a section on Avernus, hell's outermost layer, including a sample adventure detailing what characters landing in hell might encounter. From Avernus, the River Styx flows into the Inner Hells, so information for traveling the Styx into those infernal lands is also included. The final section looks at hell's archipelago, the Outer Torments, which float around Baator like many small moons, each with its own plots hatched by mortal, outsider, and devil alike.



exiled. Because the god of Baator was soft and merciful, Asmodeus did not perish; instead, he suffered, stripped of his beauty, broken in mind and body, on the fields of Avernus. Perhaps He Who Was believed that Asmodeus would come to regret his pride and disobedience.

Asmodeus's pride was greater than his guilt, however, and he and his followers grew into their new and broken forms. As Asmodeus suffered, he planned revenge against He Who Was and the other gods who had stood by and forgotten about his sacrifices during the Dawn War. Asmodeus waited until a grim time in the Dawn War when the gods appeared to be losing. He Who Was was partly to blame—he had no stomach for war, had exiled his most powerful general and army, and though he was a powerful god, he could not handle the brutal work of war.

Choosing his moment, Asmodeus rose up and slew his master. The god couldn't save himself, but his dying curse trapped Asmodeus and all of Asmodeus's followers in Baator. Those followers, who eventually would become devils, blamed Asmodeus for botching the job, but the situation turned to his advantage soon enough. Most of the gods cursed Asmodeus as a traitor, but many understood that he had cunningly rid the gods of a failed leader whose efforts seemed destined to lead to the ruin of all. Thus, while they overtly shunned the rebel exarch, some gods bargained secretly with Asmodeus, soliciting his aid in the war with the primordials, while other evil gods treated with him out of gratitude for slaying a self-righteous god who was just in the way.

For decades, the gods did not trust Asmodeus enough to release him from the Hells, which would allow him to claim the full divine power that had been released when he slew his overlord. Asmodeus claimed that he, and only he, could use that power to win the Dawn War for the gods. But the gods' mistrust was warranted: Asmodeus was making overtures to the other side as well. He plotted with titans and giants in service to the primordials, striking bargains that would favor him if their side won the Dawn War.

The deities must have made the better offer, though they didn't realize it at the time. The gods forged a pact of alliance with Asmodeus, granting him his former master's divine power temporarily "until the primordials were vanquished." Asmodeus assured them that he and his forces would annihilate the primordials quickly, and he would then give up his borrowed power. (He also inserted language into the contract that would provide for the preservation of Baator through the use of souls—and did not mention that those clauses were effective in perpetuity.)

Distracted by their fury at the primordials and their desperation to finish the war, the gods did not all muddle through the implications of the wording

in Asmodeus's pact. Some fell prey to his honeyed assurances.

Asmodeus has, of course, ruled the Nine Hells ever since.

DEVILISH MOTIVES AND ADVENTURES

The devils of the Nine Hells are motivated by several general forces, and these influences drive most adventures in the Hells. Discussed below are the key components of what it means to be a devil, each followed by suggestions for related adventures for characters of all tiers.

ARROGANCE AND AMBITION (MAKING A HEAVEN OF HELL)

The devils were originally rebels from their old calling, and thus their politics are defined by pride, which drives their schemes to rise higher.

Every devil constantly scrabbles at power or tries to curry favor with its superiors, simply because—in its pride—every devil in the Nine Hells is utterly convinced it is better than every other one. Upward mobility comes through success—either in claiming souls or eliminating one's rivals—and even though the process of promotion to a new, higher form of devil is infinitely painful, most devils long for this advancement with a kind of desperate affection that gives mortal lovers pause.

Devils are also extremely stubborn: Each one is certain of its path and deviates from its favored methods only under duress, or when it thinks there is favor to be gained.

Planar adventurers are an important aspect of hell's political struggles, because they make convenient cat's-paws to be used against rivals, or scapegoats who can be disposed of with relative ease when a scheme goes awry. Adventurers who prove themselves useful (and survive treachery) acquire powerful patrons that can supply them with important information, treasure, or even magic items to aid their efforts. Devils are miserly by nature, but the wisest among them use rewards to motivate their servants.

Adventures related to this theme could incorporate any of the following three ideas.

The Least of These (heroic): A fawning imp has acquired information about a pit fiend's fierce desire to own a device of great power and has enlisted the characters to recover the item with the hope of currying favor and being promoted to a higher form.

The Bad Seed (paragon): Jealous of his master's favor for a cambion sellsword, a barbed devil is seeking to frame her for disloyalty to their superior; it hires the characters to investigate her.

The Devil You Know (epic): The characters have been approached by agents of Mephistopheles to gauge their interest in a strike against Asmodeus, lord of the Hells. This proposal might be a trick to demonstrate Mephistopheles's power and loyalty (see the sidebar), or a legitimate coup in the making, in which case the characters must decide if it is better to maintain the status quo or place a new, possibly more dangerous ruler on the throne of the Hells.

AVARICE AND GREED (GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE)

The Nine Hells are a wealthy realm, thanks primarily to Asmodeus's economic savvy. During the Dawn War, he foresaw the damage to the universe and the malfunction of the afterlife and made certain pacts with forces divine, primordial, and beyond in order to prepare. Individually, these pacts seemed innocuous to the signers, but when the pacts started functioning together after the Dawn War, their perfect combination has allowed for a substantial soul harvest in a broken universe.

The full scope of Asmodeus's wheeling and dealing is unknown and might never be revealed, but one fact is clear: It has paid off well. The Hells do not suffer from the diminished distribution of souls that afflicts other realms. In fact, the devils have a steady flow of souls of their own, plus the freedom to pluck unclaimed souls that end up in the border islands of their destined realms. Unlike all the other divine dominions, the Nine Hells admits outsiders, though their relatively fragile soulforms can die only once in hell's torments. In their despair, some of these lost souls come willingly—to fall as Asmodeus did and devote themselves to rebellion against their former deities. Others are forcibly constrained.

Devils are ever mindful of harvesting souls with an eye toward advancement. Wealth and power are treated in the Hells in the same way they are in most mortal tyrannies: They are tightly held by the elite as a lure for the lower classes. Rather than coin, devils trade in the plentiful souls constantly appearing in their realm, which are collected in bulk by lesser devils, processed, and shipped to the lord of a

given layer (and those archdevils who pay the proper tribute). The ownership of souls that a devil seduces or tricks through pacts and the like, however, tends to be less clear-cut—a successful succubus or other tempter devil can amass a considerable amount of power.

Adventures related to this theme could include:

A Lost Soul in Hell (heroic): In the world, a mortal friend or loved one begs the characters for help against a succubus with whom he has made a pact, but before they can aid him, the devil engineers his death. Now the characters must venture into the Hells to find and rescue his soul.

Soul Theft (paragon): A bone devil responsible for gathering souls for Lord Mammon's keep has come up short on his manifest and is offering great rewards to any outside auditors who help him find the thief.

Soul Influx (epic): The flow of souls into hell has dramatically increased of late, and the characters need to discover why.

VENGEANCE AND RETRIBUTION (HELL HATH NO FURY)

Devils are big on revenge—grudges are in their nature. Since Asmodeus first turned upon his forgotten master, the Nine Hells have been the realm of traitors and mutineers. Devils avenge slights made against them by gods, mortals, and (especially) their fellow devils—whether from offended pride or out of mere spite. Planar adventurers can be easily caught up in such feuds, or even be the target of such enmity themselves, whether immediately or at a future time. Devils have a strong sense of fairness and measured response—an eye for an eye—but their understanding is far different from that of humans: They prefer to inflict as much retribution as they can in the name of grievances that are sometimes difficult to measure. For instance, a mortal who banished a devil back to the Hells in a battle might be held responsible for physical damages, mental duress, and the insult to the devil's pride, image, and self-confidence. Time, however, is not a good method of escape from

SCHEMING OR BLUFFING?

Traditionally, Asmodeus has always been so powerful that he doesn't have to fear any single archdevil, though a union of lesser devils might overpower him. To prevent such a union, he has plied his talents at diplomacy and intrigue to foster rivalries and feuds among those in the other eight hells, while always seeming to side with the winner in a conflict (much as he did in the Dawn War).

This state of affairs might be changing, however. It is rumored that Mephistopheles, Lord of the Eighth (whose

jealousy of the mightier Asmodeus knows no bounds), has obtained a shard of godhood that enhances his own powers to the point that he might be able to move against his master, given aid. The veracity of this claim is unknown, and Mephistopheles isn't telling. True to devilish form, Mephistopheles keeps the truth of his power secret and will continue to cater to Asmodeus as long as necessary, seeking to lull the Lord of the Nine into a false sense of security and make himself seem weaker, until he decides the time is right to make his move.

infernal vengeance, because devils have notoriously long memories.

Adventures related to this theme could include:

Sins of the Fathers (heroic): A devil banished to the Hells a century ago by the ancestors of one or more of the characters has returned looking for revenge, either against its foes or the living family of those foes—the characters or their loved ones.

A Dish Served Cold (paragon): A devil nursing a grudge against the characters transports them to Cania for a confrontation, wounds them, and leaves them to freeze to death. The characters must regroup, figure out a way to escape the frozen realm, and find the culprit.

A Woman Scorned (epic): Glasya, the recently appointed ruler of Malbolge, has been making advances to one of her fellow Lords of the Nine—advances that have been rejected. Bristling with indignation, she has employed the characters to wreak her vengeance.

AVERNUS, THE BURNING WASTES

Consisting of the entire blasted surface of Baator, the first layer of the Nine Hells is the largest and the first place most visitors ever see—and sometimes the last. Many have mistaken the surface realm for the softest of the Nine, but it is the most dangerous in many ways.

Much of the surface layer of the Hells is watched by vast camps of legion devil armies under the strict control of Bel and the Dark Eight. No invasion of hell by demons or angels has ever made it past Avernus, though vast stretches of badlands are drenched in the blood and gore of thousands of years of near-constant conflict. The Blood War (*Manual of the Planes*, page 89) between devils and demons might have ended or gone dormant, but the forces of Avernus haven't relaxed.

The soul harvesters do excellent work in Avernus, since those souls condemned to the Nine Hells most often materialize on the top layer. The damned souls fall into the Lake of Despond (*Manual of the Planes*, page 99) or streak flaming out of the sky to break craters in the blackened ground. The “crater makers” are the fortunate ones. If their bodies are not found by the bearded devils and spinagons who hunt constantly for errant souls, they might return to life through the magic of the dominion before they can be captured and taken below to spend the rest of their lives and deaths in torment. Escape is unlikely, but a few last moments of painful freedom are beyond value.



BEL, MASTER OF AVERNUS

The master of Avernus didn't reach his position through carelessness or luck—he holds Avernus tightly considering the realm's size, and his imp and spinagon spies are everywhere. Bel's circle of pit fiend advisors, the Dark Eight, are extremely loyal to him and have been for centuries. Given that they would probably turn upon him at the first sign of serious weakness, Bel's control remains absolute.

With such forces at his command, Bel could probably march against any of the other eight archdevils with some success, but unlike the other Lords of the Nine, he strangely has no further ambition or desire to displace one of the other lords. He likes his appointed task and wants nothing more than to remain in his position as sentry to the Hells and first general of its armies for all time. He is loyal first to Asmodeus, second to the Nine Hells in general, and third to himself.

Using Bel in the Game: Bel is a consummate general—cunning, calculating, and impossible to surprise. He is also a shrewd negotiator—one who keeps his promises to the letter and cares more about the letter than the spirit of the law. He is evil but not

necessarily malevolent, enjoying inflicting pain but preferring to do his duty first and foremost. Nothing the characters do is likely to catch Bel off guard; if he has one weakness, however, it is his mistrust of and contempt for magic. Bel prefers the way of the sword and spear.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

Avernus is a militaristic realm where strength is respected more than cleverness, and valor more than wisdom. Arguments are settled mostly through strict disciplined processes or through prescribed dueling procedures in the absence of an overseer. Laws are particularly important in this realm, and the halls of the Bronze Citadel are always filled with devils seeking arbitration on some technical point. Many devils take great pleasure in such disputes, showing an almost masochistic delight in legal battling.

The damned have little in the way of an established culture, being mostly prisoners who are too frightened to resist their torments or to try to escape. Those few who do manage to escape usually seek to avoid the beasts set on their trail by hiding in the mountains or in the ruins of Darkspine. Some of these are set free purposefully in order to give their keepers quarry for their hunts. Terror from the chase is but one of the torments in the Hells.

Avernus is also home to the highest percentage of nondevils in the Nine Hells who aren't slaves. Tieflings and cambions are common, though they are often in league with one archdevil or another (who might or might not be the source of the devilish taint in their blood). Other mortals or nondevils are not unknown in Avernus: most are advisers to an archdevil in exile, powerful mercenaries in the employ of Bel or one of the Dark Eight, or lords in their own right that have carved out a dwelling place in the burning lands for their own purpose.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Avernus adventures generally involve firestorms, packs of slaving beasts, and legions of devil soldiers. The characters would do well to keep a low profile, lest the armies of the Hells descend upon them in force.

A number of demons enter Avernus from time to time through intermittently functioning portals to wreak havoc; the days of abyssal invasions ended with the Blood War, but demons are nothing if not unpredictable.

For a three-encounter adventure set in Avernus, see "Hell's Bonds" beginning on the next page.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

All of Avernus's surface is scorched by extreme heat, which poses an environmental danger (*Dungeon*

Master's Guide, page 159). To withstand the heat, DC 22 Endurance checks must be made while traveling the surface, or DC 26 Endurance checks in certain areas such as the volcanic mountains, where ash and pervasive smoke linger. Hellfire (*Manual of the Planes*, page 22) is a common climatic terrain phenomenon.

DESPOND'S DRAINING WATERS

Unsurprisingly for the birthplace of the Styx, the Lake of Despond has a diminishing effect upon living creatures that touch it.

Effect: While a creature is within the Lake of Despond, it takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and to Will as despair leaches into it.

Usage: Creatures that have powers that can pull, push, or slide, as well as minions that might lead the characters into the lake, are useful here, especially when combined with a creature that has a strong Will attack.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Appropriate encounters for Avernus include those given in the *Monster Manual* entries for the devils, as well as those in the devil entries in this book beginning on page 136.

Level 5 Encounter (XP 1,026)

- ◆ 2 magma claws (level 4 brute, MM 182)
- ◆ 1 blazing skeleton (level 5 artillery, MM 234)
- ◆ 4 burning devils (level 4 minion skirmisher, page 136)
- ◆ 2 imps (level 3 lurker, MM 63)

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,800)

- ◆ 2 spined devils (level 6 skirmisher, MM 66)
- ◆ 3 hell hounds (level 7 brute, MM 160)
- ◆ 1 succubus (level 9 controller, MM 67)

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,950)

- ◆ 1 cambion hellfire magus (level 18 artillery, MM 39)
- ◆ 2 firebred hell hounds (level 17 brute, MM 160)
- ◆ 5 legion devil veterans (level 16 minion, MM 64)
- ◆ 1 Avernus cinderstorm hazard (level 18 blaster, *Manual of the Planes* 23)

ADVENTURE: HELL'S BONDS

This three-encounter adventure, suitable for 12th-level characters, is typical of what characters might face upon arriving in the Nine Hells. After crashing to Avernus, the characters are quickly assaulted by devilish slavers serving their archdevil mistress,

an exiled chain devil princess named Baelzra. The adventure ends in Baelzra's camp, where the characters face the devil princess and her servitors, either as slaves or as liberators of the souls she has captured.

ENCOUNTER 1: FIERY DESCENT

Encounter Level 12 (XP 3,600)

SETUP

6 whitefire burning devils (B)
3 spined devil ravagers (S)

Owing to the turbulent storms just inside the smoke veil of the Nine Hells, the characters' astral craft enters the Hells not through the storm over the Lake of Despond but rather in the empty skies of Avernus. They and their craft are now falling to the rocky plain below, and a horde of devils swept up by the storm falls upon them as they descend.

This is a more difficult encounter than it seems, owing to the time pressure and the need for one or more of the characters to devote his or her attention to controlling the ship.

When the characters cross the color veil into the Nine Hells, read:

The smoke parts, and you hang weightless among the storm clouds for a moment before falling toward the ground. As you descend into the fire and lightning, half a dozen humanoid forms—lurching, emaciated things burning with white flame—latch on to the vessel seemingly out of nowhere. They are just below the railing, tearing at it and jabbering madly with agony and hatred.

Three bulky spined devils land before you, their claws clicking on the deck. "Fleshy, fleshy, in peril now, it is," says the first. "Going down to join the damned? Give us a taste, fleshies!"

The characters must defend the deck of their planar vessel from the marauding devils and try to control their mad plummet as best they can. If they don't try to control the ship, or if they try and fail, they might fend off the devils but will surely crash, making the next encounter much harder.

The burning devils are clinging to the sides of the ship just below the rail. Melee attacks affect them normally, but line of effect for ranged attacks requires the attacker to be in a square adjacent to the target (along the railing), which provokes opportunity

attacks from the burning devils. The burning devils pay more attention to destroying the ship, while the spined devil ravagers engage the characters. Both groups must be handled, or piloting will be difficult.

3 Spined Devil Ravagers (S)		Level 12 Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 700 each
Initiative +11	Senses Perception +14; darkvision	
HP 120; Bloodied 60		
AC 26; Fortitude 24, Reflex 22, Will 22		
Resist 20 fire		
Speed 5, fly 7 (hover)		
Ⓢ Claws (standard; at-will)		
+17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage.		
✂ Spinestorm (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Poison		
The spined devil ravager flings spines that ignite as they fly through the air. Ranged 10; targets one or two creatures; +15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 3 fire damage, and the target takes ongoing 10 poison damage and is slowed (save ends both).		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Supernal	
Str 20 (+11)	Dex 17 (+9)	Wis 16 (+9)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 12 (+7)	Cha 15 (+8)

6 Whitefire Burning Devils (B)		Level 14 Minion Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 250 each
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +10; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 24		
Resist 15 fire, 20 radiant		
Speed 7		
④ Burning Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
+19 vs. AC; 9 radiant damage.		
⚡ Whiteflame Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 9 radiant damage.		
⚡ Whitefire Burst (when the whitefire burning devil drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Radiant		
Close burst 2; no attack roll; the target takes ongoing 9 radiant damage (save ends).		
Brilliant Alacrity (free, when the whitefire burning devil is missed by a fire or radiant attack) ♦ Radiant, Teleportation		
The whitefire burning devil teleports 7 squares. At the end of the movement, the burning devil makes a whiteflame bolt attack against the creature that made the triggering attack.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Supernal	
Str 16 (+10)	Dex 22 (+13)	Wis 16 (+10)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 10 (+7)	Cha 10 (+7)

TACTICS

The spined devil ravagers delight in toying with their foes. They're more interested in delaying and frustrating their enemies' efforts to control the ship than an outright fight to the death. The whitefire burning devils occupy themselves with tearing at the ship (see "Controlling the Ship," below), but they disengage and move to attack a character who attacks them.

THE SHIP'S DESCENT

The falling ship crashes onto the surface of Avernus on its 11th turn (the ship has a +10 initiative modifier). When the encounter starts, and for at least the first 2 rounds of the combat, the ship is falling. If the characters don't successfully control the ship (see below), the descent becomes more severe—first the ship begins to tumble, and then it goes into a mad spin.

Falling: The ship is simply falling during the first 2 rounds of combat (or possibly longer if a character successfully controls it). Whenever a creature is hit by a critical hit while the ship is falling, the creature is also knocked prone. Pull, push, and slide effects increase by 1 square. If the characters fail to successfully control the ship, it begins to tumble after its first two turns.

Tumbling: When the ship begins to tumble, it rocks back and forth and spins. Whenever a creature is hit by an attack while the ship is tumbling, the creature is also knocked prone. Pull, push, and slide effects increase by 2 squares. If the characters fail to successfully control the ship while it's tumbling, the ship enters a mad spin in the following round.

Mad Spin: While the ship is in a mad spin, it spins crazily in all directions. Controlling the vessel will no longer help. Any creature without a fly speed that takes any action must spend a move action to hold on or be thrown from the ship and take 9d10 falling damage. Creatures thrown from the ship are removed from the encounter. Thrown characters who survive will rejoin the rest of the group during Encounter 2: Hell's Chain Gang.

CONTROLLING THE SHIP

Controlling the ship requires a character to stand in one of the two helm areas (marked on the map with triangles inside circles). As a standard action, a creature at the helm can make an Arcana check or an Athletics check to control the ship. The check's DC depends on which phase of the descent the ship is currently in.

Falling: DC 18

Tumbling: DC 23

Each round the characters succeed in controlling the ship, they delay the progression to the next stage of the descent on the ship's next turn. Only one

controlling success can be gained during a turn, and the ship can't be returned to an earlier descent phase. Each time the PCs drop a burning devil, the DC to control the ship is reduced by 1.

THE CRASH

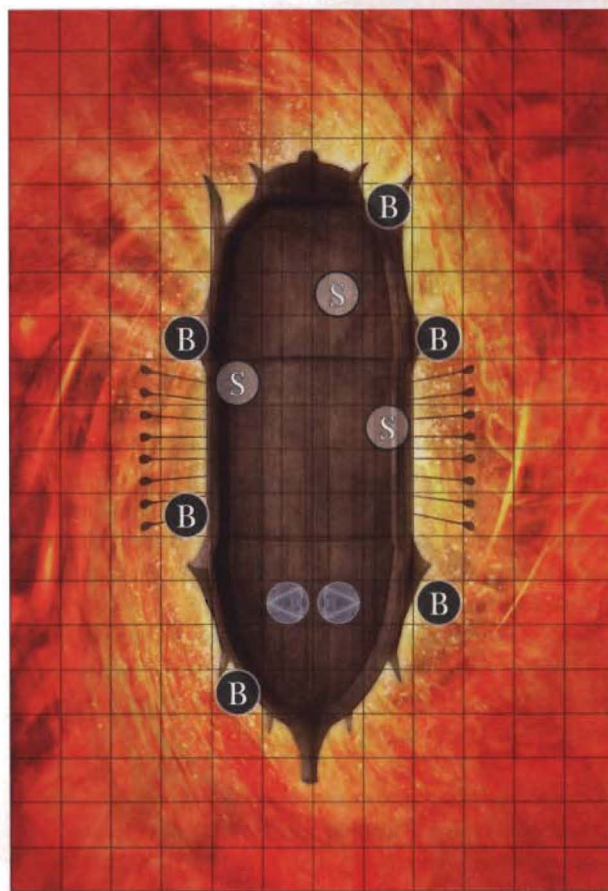
When the ship crashes, the impact kills all the remaining burning devils but not the spined devil ravagers—they fly away, seemingly abandoning the fight. But they will return with reinforcements during the next encounter.

The crash's effect on the characters depends on the ship's descent phase when it crashed.

Falling: Each character takes 2d10 damage.

Tumbling: Each character takes 4d10 damage.

Mad Spin: Each character takes 7d10 damage.



ENCOUNTER 2: HELL'S CHAIN GANG

Encounter Level 13 (XP 4,000)

SETUP

- 1 pain devil captain (P)
- 2 bearded devils (B)
- 3 chain devils (C)
- 0-3 spined devil ravagers (any that survived from Encounter 1)

Having crashed on Avernus, the characters must defend themselves from a devil slaver gang seeking to pillage the ruins of their astral craft.

When the characters gather themselves from their crash, read:

The broken ship has finally come to rest on a rocky stretch of shore at the edge of a vast, glassy black lake. A chorus of screams resounds across the churning waters, and the ground shakes from the thunderous impact of flaming meteors piercing it from above. The sky is filled with gray smoke that clings to your lungs, choking your breath.

The characters' situation at the beginning of this encounter depends on the outcome of the previous encounter.

If the ship was falling when it crashed and no spined devil ravagers escaped, the characters spot the slaver gang's approach 5 minutes in advance, enabling them to take a short rest, and they can set an ambush, gaining a surprise round.

If the ship was tumbling when it crashed and no spined devil ravagers escaped, the characters don't gain a surprise round and the slaver gang's attack happens immediately.

If the ship was in a mad spin when it crashed or any of the spined devil ravagers escaped, the slaver gang sneaks up on the characters and gains a surprise round, attacking immediately.

When the characters see the devils, read:

You hear rhythmic chanting as a group of dark figures marches toward you. Many appear at first to be chained slaves following the commands of a fearsome taskmaster and herded by a pair of bearded lieutenants. As they draw closer, you realize the chains clothe the figures—or perhaps they're part of the creatures' bodies.

"Your souls belong to Baelzra now, mortals," says their leader, a muscular creature in blood-smeared leather whose face is hidden behind a mask. "Submit, or perish and suffer still more!"

Pain Devil Captain (P) **Level 11 Controller (Leader)**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 600

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +13, darkvision
Aura of Torment aura 2; a creature without the devil keyword that starts its turn within the aura takes 2 damage.
HP 110; **Bloodied** 55
AC 25; **Fortitude** 23, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21
Resist 10 fire
Speed 5
⚔ **Scourge** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC, 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the pain devil captain's next turn.
⚡ **Ignite Weaponry** (standard; recharge ⚡ ii) ♦ **Fire**
Close burst 10; allies in the burst deal 5 extra fire damage with weapon attacks until the end of the pain devil captain's next turn.
Supreme Sadism
When the pain devil captain scores a critical hit or bloodies an enemy with an attack, it and each ally within 5 squares of it gain 10 temporary hit points.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 20 (+10) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 14 (+7) **Int** 14 (+7) **Cha** 12 (+6)
Equipment scourge

2 Bearded Devils (B) **Level 13 Soldier**
Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 800 each

Initiative +10 **Senses** Perception +14; darkvision
Beard Tendrils aura 1; enemies that begin their turns adjacent to the bearded devil take 5 damage.
HP 129; **Bloodied** 64
AC 29; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 23
Resist 20 fire
Speed 6
⚔ **Glaive** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the bearded devil's next turn and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).
⚔ **Claw** (standard; at-will)
+18 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage.
Battle Frenzy
While a bearded devil is bloodied, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and deals 5 extra damage with its melee attacks.
Devilish Teamwork
Allies adjacent to a bearded devil gain a +2 power bonus to AC.
Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 20 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+8) **Wis** 16 (+9)
Con 17 (+9) **Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 11 (+6)
Equipment glaive

3 Chain Devils (C) Level 11 Skirmisher

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

XP 600 each

Initiative +14 Senses Perception +7, darkvision

HP 116; Bloodied 58

AC 25; Fortitude 22, Reflex 24, Will 19

Resist 20 fire

Speed 7; see also *dance of battle*⊕ **Spiked Chain** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +16 vs. AC, 2d4 + 7 damage.

⊕ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)

The chain devil makes two spiked chain attacks.

⊕ **Chains of Vengeance** (free; when first bloodied; encounter)

The chain devil makes two spiked chain attacks.

⊕ **Hellish Chains** (standard; at-will)

+14 vs. Reflex; the target is wrapped in chains and restrained (save ends). The chain devil can use its chains to restrain only one creature at a time.

Dance of Battle (minor; at-will)

The chain devil shifts 1 square.

Dance of Defiance (immediate interrupt, when a melee attack is made against the chain devil; recharges after the chain devil uses *chains of vengeance*)

The chain devil shifts 1 square.

Alignment Evil Languages Supernal

Skills Intimidate +11

Str 19 (+9) Dex 24 (+12) Wis 15 (+7)

Con 20 (+10) Int 14 (+7) Cha 13 (+6)

TACTICS

The chain devils are the first wave of the assault, followed closely by the bearded devils. They want to pummel the characters into surrendering, but will not hesitate to use lethal force as needed.

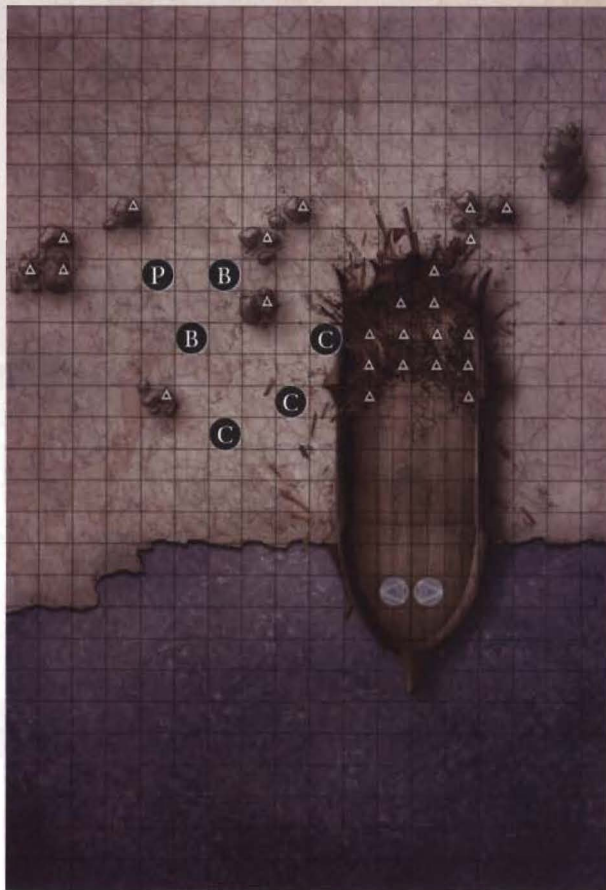
The pain devil captain commands the attack from a distance and attempts to avoid joining the fray until one of the other devils is bloodied or the captain is directly attacked.

Any spined devil ravager that survived the previous encounter returns in the second round of combat, flying down to wreak its vengeance, preferably against any character not already engaged in melee.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters surrender or are defeated (the devils won't deliver killing blows when they drop a character if they can help it), they are taken in chains to see Baelzra. In that case, she is prepared for their arrival, and the encounter is correspondingly more difficult.

If the characters defeat the devils, they can easily tell where the devils came from—the prison camp a few minutes' travel around the lakeshore, with its thousand wailing souls crying out for release, is difficult to miss.



ENCOUNTER 2: HELL'S CHAIN GANG

FEATURES OF THE AREA

The Broken Ship: The characters' astral vessel is nonfunctional for now, but it can still be useful. The squares of wreckage marked with triangles are difficult terrain.

The Lake of Despond: The lake offers cover to a creature that submerges itself therein; however, any creature that makes contact with its soul-draining waters takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and to Will until the end of the encounter.

ENCOUNTER 3: PRINCESS IN CHAINS

Encounter Level 15 (XP 6,800)

SETUP

Baelzra, Chain Princess of Jangling Hiter (B)
1 yuan-ti malison incanter (Y)
2 warder devils (W)

At Baelzra's camp, souls are harvested and secretly unbound from the Hells by a dark yuan-ti ritual to make them easier to use in transactions. Baelzra's reasoning is that if the souls are no longer "damned," then they do not by default belong to Asmodeus or one of the Lords of the Nine. Therefore, Baelzra can claim them without difficulty.

If the characters manage to sneak up on the camp, they might have had time to take an extended rest. Additionally, if they attack Baelzra and her yuan-ti incanter with surprise, they have 3 rounds before the warder devils arrive.

If the characters are prisoners, Baelzra will have her full retinue (the yuan-ti and both devils) present. Additionally, the characters can take only a short rest, not an extended one, during their journey to the camp.

Baelzra has grown bored without a proper fight lately, so if the characters are brought to her as prisoners, she sees an opportunity to relieve her tedium as well as to sweeten their souls with despair by seemingly offering them a fighting chance before crushing them. She commands the warder devils to "soften them up" (in game terms, each character loses a healing surge as an indirect result of a severe beating), and then release them and return their equipment for a full battle with Baelzra and her entourage.

When the characters see Baelzra, read:

A line of cowering souls in chains leads to a large sacrificial circle on which is set an altar of black stone. Standing before the altar is a beautiful female human bound in a series of chains that slither around her like living serpents. A second look reveals her clearly devilish appearance: horns, mad eyes, and a long, forked tongue. At her side is a snake-headed humanoid.

BAELZRA

An exiled archdevil clad only in blood-soaked chains slick with poison, Baelzra is the product of an affair between the corpulent archdevil Sagirsa, queen of Jangling Hiter (*Manual of the Planes*, page 101), and Mammon, the lord of the Third Hell, Minauros. In contrast to her parents, the raven-haired Baelzra is almost too beautiful—in body, anyway. All her ugliness is within, and there she surpasses either of her horrendous parents; her voice hints at this, sounding like that of a withered crone rather than an alluring young woman.

"You are the ones!" the devilish woman cries in a ragged voice. "Baelzra shall enjoy punishing you for daring to oppose her."

Her chains rustle and snake toward you as she cackles a battle cry.

TACTICS

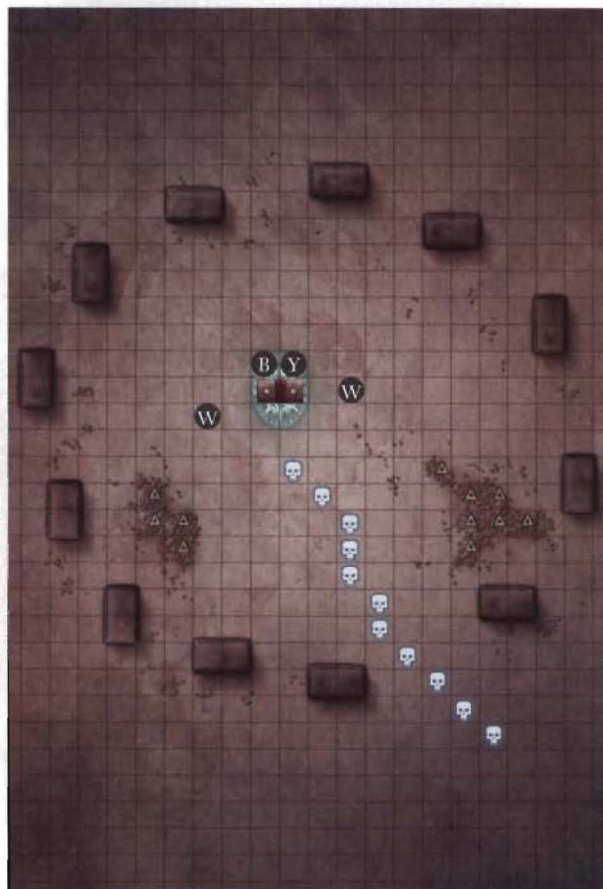
Baelzra enjoys battle and throws herself into the fray with wild abandon, mocking her opponents in her loud, broken voice, or else simply cackling to frighten her foes. The yuan-ti malison incanter is loyal to her, but it will try to preserve its own life and keeps out of the melee. Baelzra and the yuan-ti are each defended by one warder devil. If the warder devil defending Baelzra is slain, the surviving devil shifts its focus to her, leaving the incanter to fend for itself.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Soul-Unbinding Circle: This circle is infused with healing energy. If a healing power is used or a healing surge is spent on a target in this circle, the target regains 2d6 additional hit points.

Menhirs: These great stone pillars provide cover.

Rubble: Piles of rubble are difficult terrain.



Chained Souls: Squares marked with skull images are the locations of cowering souls being led to the altar in the circle. The souls are intangible and take no actions, but they provide concealment to any creature occupying the same space as one. They can be attacked and eradicated; each soul has 1 hit point and all its defenses are 15. Any successful attack against a creature using a soul for concealment destroys the soul in that square.

DEVELOPMENT

If Baelzra is slain, the captive souls are freed from their captivity and begin to dissipate—in effect, they are going through a reassignment, gaining another shot at going to the correct afterlife. A character who succeeds on a DC 18 Arcana check or Insight check realizes what's going on and understands that the adventurers might be able to reap some long-term benefit from having ruined Baelzra's plan.

If Baelzra's crimes are subsequently brought to the attention of Bel or one of the Dark Eight, the characters might be rewarded for their efforts, or at least permitted to travel unmolested through Avernus. Regardless of whether they understand what they have done, the characters will almost certainly have made an enemy of Mammon by their actions, who—despite Baelzra's exile—still doted on his daughter and was secretly deriving some soul profit from her actions.

Baelzra, Chain Princess (B) Level 16 Elite Controller

Medium immortal humanoid (devil) XP 2,800

Initiative +17 **Senses** Perception +8; darkvision

Aura of Clutching Chains aura 2; any enemy that starts its turn in the aura takes 10 damage and is slowed until the end of its turn.

HP 320; **Bloodied** 160

AC 30; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 30, **Will** 21

Resist 20 fire

Speed 7; see also *dance of battle*

Action Points 1

④ **Spiked Chain** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison, Weapon**

Reach 2; +21 vs. AC, 2d4+7 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

† **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)

Baelzra makes two *spiked chain* attacks.

† **Binding Chains** (free; when Baelzra hits with a *spiked chain* attack; at-will)

+20 vs. Reflex; the target is restrained (save ends). Baelzra can use her chains to restrain only two creatures at a time.

⚡ **Rage Spiral** (standard, only while bloodied; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**

Close burst 2; +20 vs. Fortitude; 2d4 + 7 damage, and the target is knocked prone and takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

Interpose Captive (immediate interrupt; when Baelzra is targeted by a ranged attack; at will)

Baelzra redirects the attack to a restrained captive.

Dance of Battle (minor; at-will)

Baelzra shifts 2 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Supernal

Skills Insight +12, Intimidate +16

Str 20 (+13) **Dex** 26 (+16) **Wis** 15 (+8)

Con 24 (+15) **Int** 16 (+12) **Cha** 17 (+11)

Equipment spiked chain

Yuan-ti Malison Incanter (Y) Level 15 Artillery (Leader)

Medium natural humanoid (reptile)

XP 1,200

Initiative +13 **Senses** Perception +13

Zehir's Shield aura 10; allies in the aura gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses.

HP 118; **Bloodied** 59; see also *poisoned domination* and *slither away*
AC 29; **Fortitude** 26, **Reflex** 27, **Will** 27; see also *deflect attack* and *slither away*

Resist 10 poison

Speed 7; see also *slither away*

④ **Bite** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Poison**

+16 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 6 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).

③ **Mindwarp** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**

Ranged 20; +20 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

⚡ **Poisoned Domination** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ **Charm**

Ranged 5; affects a creature taking ongoing poison damage; +20 vs. Will; the target is dominated until the end of the incanter's next turn. *Afterside:* The target is dazed (save ends).

⚡ **Zehir's Venom** (standard; recharge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐) ♦ **Poison**

Ranged 10; affects a creature taking ongoing poison damage; +20 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 6 poison damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

Deflect Attack (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; recharge ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐)

The yuan-ti malison incanter transfers the attack's damage and effects to an adjacent ally.

Slither Away

While bloodied, the yuan-ti malison incanter gains a +2 bonus to speed and a +5 bonus to all defenses.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Draconic, Supernal

Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +19, History +19, Insight +18, Stealth +18

Str 16 (+10) **Dex** 22 (+13) **Wis** 22 (+13)

Con 22 (+13) **Int** 25 (+14) **Cha** 25 (+14)

2 Wardevils (W)

Medium immortal humanoid (devil)

Level 16 Soldier

XP 1,400 each

Initiative +16 **Senses** Perception +8, darkvision

HP 154; **Bloodied** 77

AC 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 28, **Will** 26

Resist 20 fire

Speed 6

④ **Burning Greatsword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Fire**

+20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 11 fire damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter or until the wardevils use *burning greatsword* against a different target.

⚡ **Whirlwind Ravage** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Fire**

Close burst 1; +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 11 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). If the target is marked by the wardevils, it instead takes ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).

Hell's Step (immediate interrupt; when an enemy marked by the wardevils hits an ally; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**

The wardevils teleport 10 squares to a space adjacent to the triggering enemy and makes a *burning greatsword* attack against that creature.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal

Skills Intimidate +17

Str 22 (+14) **Dex** 18 (+12) **Wis** 11 (+8)

Con 18 (+12) **Int** 14 (+10) **Cha** 19 (+12)

Equipment greatsword

THE OUTER TORMENTS: HELL'S BORDER ISLANDS

Like the other astral dominions, the Nine Hells have their own borderlands—hunks of rock and air floating like moons around the blasted planet of Baator.

Hell's archipelago—called the Outer Torments—is made of terrible islets of all sorts, has no central authority, and is rife with island-by-island despotisms and fortresses. The power that Asmodeus wields does not function in the islets. In fact, many of the Lords of the Nine seem unaware of the existence of the Torments, and those who live there are not automatically damned. Legion devils and other would-be tyrants stake claims upon the outer islands, playing out dreams of tyranny that are not available to them inside the fully hierarchical Nine Hells.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

Several of the Outer Torments are well known beyond the borders of the Nine Hells—in particular, the Soul Market (also known as Fair Trade Island) and Hell's Bastion, which most astral travelers visit in lieu of entering the Hells proper.

The Torments are hospitable to nondevils and trade on the great wealth of the dominion belonging to Asmodeus. Equally as many mortals (and displaced exalted) as devils can be found here, though unclaimed souls face a particular hazard. They are considered property rather than free entities and must submit to a master or risk damnation. Any souls that are already damned must be yielded immediately to agents of Asmodeus or those of another Lord of the Nine. Other souls imported, enslaved, or purchased from githyanki or the like can be employed in the Torments as slaves. Also, a number of these souls are purchased or stolen by hell's harvesters and dragged down through the burning skies to Avernus.

The mortals in the Outer Torments are mostly tieflings, humans, dwarves, and dragonborn, in that order of frequency; eladrin, elves, and halflings, typically passionate individuals, are inclined to find the drudgery enervating and the constant cries of pain disturbing. As though by a certain taint of the

proximity of the Hells, the folk of the Outer Torments are prone to take on a number of devilish characteristics over time; they become proud, ambitious, and greedy, and their tolerance for insults wanes over the years.

MAJOR AREAS

There are many Outer Torments islands, and not all have been discovered among the constant cumulonimbus clouds that cling to the color veil of the Hells. The islands are diverse, each representing a different sort of hell, similar to the way in which the nine layers of Baator present different sufferings. Several of the islands are more insidious, however, and most visitors do not realize their peril until it is far too late.

THE SOUL MARKET

Most neutral of the Outer Torments, where the agents of various devils and astral forces come to trade, the place also called Fair Trade Island is a hospitable entry point for the Hells. On the surface, it is a pleasure palace full of endless winding platform streets shaded by multicolored awnings, where succubi serve exotic drinks and money changes hands under heavily perfumed tables. Coin rules this island city, and folk come from many distant realms in the Astral Sea for this reason.

In the market, substantial trade thrives between the denizens of the Hells and merchants of the Astral Sea, at least for those who pay the proper tariff: typically a sacrificed mortal or a captured soul offered to the guard, which is a small price to pay for a chance at the wealth of the Hells. Under the eyes of watchful warder devils and osyluths, prisoners and slaves are traded for goods crafted from harvested soul energy or the powerful minerals mined from deep in the Hells. The oddest combinations of folk, from eladrin and cambions to devils and githyanki, can be encountered doing business in the market.

Strict order is maintained throughout the island city, thanks to the watchful guard of warder and legion devils, as well as a number of angels sworn to the service of the Hells. They are commanded by the city's hags, who control the flow of coin and run most

ARCHDEVILS OF THE OUTER TORMENTS

Many of the Outer Torments are claimed, whether appropriately or not, by one or more exiled archdevils that have been unable to leave the Nine Hells because of bindings—a number of which are purely psychological, though several are magical in nature. An example of the latter is the planar commitment, a forbidding curse that Asmodeus bestows. In their pride, these archdevils cannot bring themselves to give up the struggle for power in the Hells, convincing themselves that a chance remains for them to be restored to favor. They treat the

Outer Torments as their own private playground, brutalizing the inhabitants in an attempt to bolster their own injured pride.

Kept continually in the loop by planted succubi, spinagons, and other spies, Asmodeus is not nearly as oblivious to events in the Torments as the impression he gives. Occasionally, he pulls one or more archdevils back into hell to punish them for daring to imitate his rule, for political scheming (favors to devils Asmodeus wants to remain loyal), or for his own dark amusement.



of the trading houses as well as a number of houses of ill repute.

The peace of Fair Trade Island is a delicate veneer; most of the significant business takes place in the shadows through underhanded deals and stealthy assassinations. The merchants do not take kindly to being robbed. But since most of them end up being robbed, they do their best to bilk customers in turn. Folk can make powerful enemies at the Soul Market; at the same time, they can gain treasures there.

Archdevils of Fair Trade Island: No single archdevil rules the market; rather, heads of several “families” of devils compete for an advantage on the island of trade. Each thinks that by dominating the coin flow, he or she can amass enough wealth and power to allow for a return to grace in the Hells—or, alternatively, by financing a coordinated strike against one Lord of the Nine or another, it might be possible to claim a vacant throne. The archdevils, however, are too occupied with their own infighting to move against Asmodeus or any of his chosen lords.

Three archdevils are the most powerful in Fair Trade Island at the moment: the ruthless Vergin-ion the Virile, called the Vile by his detractors; bloated Svidanfi, the queen of assassin devils; and the ascended bone devil Strezgaz the Crackling, so named for the sound his bones make when he walks.

MALHARAK, HELL'S BASTION

The last loyal holdout of Baator's now nameless master, He Who Was, Malharak was taken over only after a century-long siege. It is a tribute to both the

might of the fortress and the ferocity of its defenders that it lasted so long. Asmodeus sent the surviving angels within Malharak to join the community of angels that flows through the dominions, an act of apparent mercy that confused a few of his critics. He went so far as to spare a number of servitors of He Who Was—mortals and immortals that had defended Malharak—as long as they swore fealty to him. Several consented; the others were slain.

Malharak stands as impregnable as before, at the top of a towering cliff from which its defenders mount sweeping aerial attacks upon potential invaders. It has never been conquered in battle and rivals Dis in that respect. Since Malharak is sworn to no particular archdevil except Asmodeus, who is beloved by the Bastion's current ruler, anyone and everyone who can pay for the protection of the fortress uses it. Powerful weapons and rare rituals are locked away in the earthmote below the castle, as are a number of devils too mighty and dangerous for simple exile.

Sometimes one devil or another wants to obtain an item, rescue an ally, or slay a rival imprisoned in the Bastion. Wandering adventurers fill this need nicely. Occasionally, particularly powerful or important mortals are imprisoned here rather than elsewhere in the Hells—often during a dispute in jurisdiction between two or more archdevils or Lords of the Nine.

Archdevil of Hell's Bastion: Assailra, a warder devil who rose to prominence through her service to Asmodeus, had a falling-out with the devil king's daughter, Glasya, over a shared lover and was exiled from the Hells. She soon took over leadership of the Bastion and has been quietly hoping to impress her beloved master with her skill and brutality. She hates the queen of Malbolge with a burning passion.

SCREAMSTONE

A windswept, black rock floating at the edge of the Astral Sea, this Outer Torment contains a spiraling underground set of catacombs and torture chambers where the most talented sadists of the cosmos do what they do best. New tortures are created and put into practice in Screairstone, and each of them is tailored specifically to the intended victim. Though the island is silent on its surface, screams reverberate up through the glassy stone and cause it to tremble slightly underfoot.

For good reason, devils fear Screairstone as they fear few locations in the Nine Hells. It is the place to which devils are exiled when the Lords of the Nine want neither to see them again nor to grant the mercy of a quick death. Execution by Screairstone is a process lasting centuries—if the torturers work true to form.

Archdevil of Screairstone: Veris, the Weeping One, is the self-appointed lord of Screairstone—a master of pain and suffering who takes a keen pleasure in both. His teacher Alloces (*Dragon* #373),

the favored torturer of Asmodeus, makes frequent appearances in *Screamstone* as a guest torturer. His visits are also fact-finding missions, during which he scouts for talented torturers to recruit for service elsewhere in the Hells.

SHORES OF SORROW

The black sand shores of this seemingly beautiful, paradisiacal island are initially welcoming to visitors—a phenomenon unheard of in the Nine Hells. Folk are greeted by spirits resembling those they loved and lost—such as a child killed accidentally in a tragic wagon accident, or a lover who wed another despite pleas to the contrary. The visitors remember all the love and none of the loss, awakening within them memories of the happiest moments of their lives. This curious effect has led many to conclude that the Shores of Sorrow is an unblemished fragment of the heaven that Baator used to be.

Such joy is fleeting, however. Inevitably, the spirits vanish without a trace into the thick forest, are slaughtered by ravening devils, or turn upon the dreamer, forcing him or her to kill them directly or be killed. This turn of events happens again and again, injecting visitors with the same sorrow and despair that afflicted them upon the original loss. Such is the torment of the Shores of Sorrow.

A number of devils dwell on the island, as do a small number of undead creatures such as wraiths, specters, and ghosts—folk wasted away by the pervasive despair.

Substantial stores of magical treasures discarded from such unfortunates lie in wait, though seekers should beware—a number of these hoards are just more illusions meant to toy with the mind.

Archdevil of the Shores of Sorrow: The archdevil Islin—once a queen in Baator, though now she barely remembers her reign—dwells in the center of the great Forest of Lament, feasting on the tragic memories of visitors. A great, bloated, spiderlike devil, she is said to know many secrets of the Nine Hells, some of which could wound several Lords of the Nine. However, having given herself over to despair, she has lost all ambition to use them. Characters could persuade her to part with such secrets if they can safely penetrate the forest and bargain with her. Islin is interested in happy memories, which she can wrench from a willing being's mind.

The Danger of Despair: The island is extremely dangerous; treat its soul-wrenching effect as an environmental danger (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 159) requiring a DC 25 Endurance check to withstand. In addition, each character takes a -1 penalty to Will for each healing surge lost to this effect until he or she regains those healing surges.



THRONEROCK

A floating earthmote hidden among thick clouds and composed mostly of a single broken mountain, this island was once a sort of scrying tower attuned to the powers of good, though its powers have waned and grown corrupt like the rest of the Hells. The throne that gives the island its name is hidden deep in a jungle of serpent-trees. Carved from obsidian and constructed to fit a Huge creature, the throne is badly weathered and lacking in prominent features, but archdevils kill each other for the chance to sneak onto Thronerock and sit upon the Obsidian Throne.

Legend of the Obsidian Throne: A devilish legend holds that, with the proper ritual, a spellcaster sitting upon the throne can view any place in the Hells, regardless of protective wards or barriers. Various folk suggest that He Who Was surveyed every single aspect of every single life in Baator from this high seat, and that it was in part such obsessive need for control that contributed to the disloyalty that Asmodeus developed within himself: The fallen angel wished for self-determination. Although the theory is not widely held, particularly considering that Asmodeus has given himself the status of the greatest tyrant in existence, individuals who subscribe to this legend tell the story as a sort of cautionary tale against becoming what one most hates.

The Obsidian Throne Today: Millennia after the fall of He Who Was, the Obsidian Throne intrigues many devils. Although its original powers have waned, the throne is still a strong source of magical power. It appeals strongly to devils' obsessive need for control, and so it is an enduring legend in the

Hells. Various archdevils are engaged in a cold war that sometimes blossoms into a bloody king-of-the-mountain game to control the island of Thronerock. The machinations in these power games could easily involve the characters.

On the other hand, the Lords of the Nine don't often concern themselves with the Obsidian Throne. They might suspect the hidden truth: Asmodeus exercises control over the throne, subtly infiltrating the mind of anyone who sits upon it. He not only sees whatever the possessor sees, he can also see every thought and memory in the possessor's head. He has gleefully turned this knowledge to his benefit on several occasions, in particular unraveling a scheme of Levistus against Nessus several decades ago. The control that Asmodeus exerts is not widely known—hence his great power. He also enjoys allowing archdevils who sit on the throne to think they are greatly increased in power, when all they are doing is fueling his own schemes. The throne doesn't exercise any overt control, and so the subtlety Asmodeus utilizes has been rewarded again and again.

Archdevils of the Obsidian Throne: No archdevil rules the isle of the Obsidian Throne, though many are active in hiring adventurers and explorers to search for the throne. In particular, Moloch and Raamothe—exiled archdevils in Avernus—are keenly interested in the throne, as is Phrenicia, a powerful succubus cast from Glasya's court, who wants to gain control of the throne to spy upon her former mistress. None of the three is aware that Asmodeus holds control of the throne's curse.

The deity Ioun has also sponsored incursions into the forests of the Obsidian Throne, seeking the lost seeing-place for her own purposes. It is uncertain if Ioun's will can contend with that of Asmodeus, or whether the devil king would be able to see into her agents' minds like any others.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Outer Torments make for a series of dungeonlike environments on the outer borders of the Nine Hells, especially since devils of the Torments are not much

inclined to go to each other's rescue. The border islands can be an excellent preliminary test for delving into the Inner Hells.

The various islands suggest adventures, from breaking into the legendary fortress of Malharak to braving the maddening visions of the Shores of Sorrow. Devils from the Hells proper often have interests in the Outer Torments as well—those who cannot travel there physically often use planar adventurers as their agents.

The Outer Torments are also sometimes a battlefield for devils that cannot move openly against one another in the Hells. Intrigues abound, from theft and random dueling to cold-blooded assassination. The characters could be embroiled in such schemes, as agents, targets, or innocent third parties pulled into the struggle.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The Outer Torments are likely to be more temperate than the rest of the Nine Hells; they maintain temperatures and weather that are somewhat soothing to mortal visitors. Thunderstorms are common, since the islands lie within the smoky color veil of the Hells. A number of the Torments (in particular Malharak and Screamstone) are prone to oppressive heat (Endurance DC 22 to withstand).

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Any encounter that can occur in the Hells or in the Astral Sea could occur in the Outer Torments. Astral dreadnoughts are common threats to crafts moving between islands, and more often than not take on a certain fiendish character from absorption of the energy of the Nine Hells.

Level 12 Encounter (XP 3,800)

- ◆ 1 beholder eye of flame (level 13 elite artillery, MM 32)
- ◆ 1 erinyes (level 13 soldier, *Monster Manual* 2 64)
- ◆ 1 gorechain devil (level 12 elite brute, *Monster Manual* 2 65)

Level 15 Encounter (XP 6,600)

- ◆ 1 night hag (level 14 lurker, MM 151)
- ◆ 1 nightmare (level 13 skirmisher, MM 196)
- ◆ 2 angels of protection (level 14 soldier, MM 15)
- ◆ 2 warder devils (level 16 soldier, page 139)

Level 19 Encounter (XP 12,000)

- ◆ 1 angel of vengeance (level 19 elite brute, MM 17)
- ◆ 1 cambion hellfire magus (level 18 artillery, MM 39)
- ◆ 1 indwelling devil (level 18 lurker, page 137)
- ◆ 1 stone golem (level 17 elite soldier, MM 142)

POWERS AND DANGERS OF THE THRONE

Though the Obsidian Throne's full capabilities are unknown to most of the Hells' denizens, its basic powers are well established. Anyone who sits upon the throne can perform any divination or scrying ritual at only half the component cost and gains a +5 bonus to Arcana checks, History checks, Nature checks, or Religion checks associated with the ritual. Upon rising from the throne, the caster feels invincible and gains a +1 bonus per tier to attack rolls with arcane or divine powers until he or she takes a rest.

After passing through a murky veil the color of falling twilight, the unfortunate traveler arriving in this realm finds a dark and blasted land. Cracked deserts stretch outward to form the slopes of jagged crags in one direction and fall away into dark canyons in the other. Hot winds wail, carrying black clouds that are the only features of a sunless, starless sky. From the deepest chasms, the glow of rolling magma sheds the dominion's only light, except for the occasional flash of lightning. Dust chokes the air, and sickening vapors rise from volcanic vents. The rains, when they come, are bruising but brief, swallowed by the thirsty earth.

Like a winding serpent, the canyons twist and turn, folding back on themselves and leaving mesas and "islands" of raised earth in their midst. Upon these, and on the brooding cliffs and chasm walls, great ziggurats and foul temples loom. These terrible edifices glisten black, because light rolls off them like the rare falling rain.

This is Tytherion, a realm of unending gloom and despair so palpable that one can smell it on the arid winds, and home of two of the darkest deities to torment the cosmos. In the high mesas and plateaus of Samaragd, the murderous serpent god Zehir coils through an endless labyrinth of caverns beneath the temples and sacrificial shrines. Throughout the lowland deeps called Azharul, the voracious dragon god Tiamat broods over ancient hoards and covets all that is not already hers. The exalted of both deities are known as darksworn. Their paths seldom cross, so one of the few mercies that uninvited guests in Tytherion can expect is that they won't have to fight the forces of both deities at the same time.

Descriptions of Tiamat's realm, along with statistics for her and her exarchs, have appeared previously in *Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons* and *Manual of the Planes*. Rather than repeating that information, this section reveals how contradictions in accounts of Tiamat's activities are deliberate misinformation spread by the god of evil dragons. Subsequently, this text examines Zehir's realm in the high mesas.

TIAMAT'S REALM: AZHARUL

The depths and lowest flatlands of Tytherion are Azharul, a hellish nightmare of towering stone walls, jagged ceilings, sheer chasms, and rivers of sluggish magma. The domain of dragons, Tiamat's realm boasts few artificial structures, consisting primarily of natural caverns and passageways, some vast enough to contain entire cities. Thus Azharul hosts few locations of any proper title; the caves are the lairs and kingdoms of Tiamat's greatest exalted, but few are sufficiently demarcated to have been recorded by mortal sages.

THE FIVE GREAT LIES OF AZHARUL

Tiamat is as deceitful as she is fearsome. She and her servitors have flooded the cosmos with half-truths and falsehoods designed to confuse her mortal and immortal enemies. Here are the truths behind five of her highly effective distortions.

THE PEACE OF TYTHERION

Remarkably, this dominion—shared between the deity of murder and the god of greed and envy—suffers no open warfare. The wilds of Tytherion are dangerous, and the servants of Tiamat and Zehir skirmish frequently, but on the whole, the serpent god keeps to the crags and highlands, and the dragon deity stays in the depths. Yet this "peace" might be only temporary (although "temporary" among the gods can encompass eons), because Tiamat is never content with what she has.

When Tiamat arose from the body of the slain god Io, she had no lair of her own. As the Dawn War ended, she set her sights upon Tytherion; its dark, dismal nature called to her, and she deemed Zehir the god that could be most easily overthrown, but she misjudged his power and determination. Although Tiamat's exalted stole a portion of Tytherion from Zehir's coils, he and his servitors were too entrenched to be utterly unearthed. Zehir's soldiers drew back to their fortified bastions, and the god retreated to the most familiar portions of his winding maze, leaving Tiamat to carve her domain from what remained. The result was the dominion's current (and peculiar) division: Azharul, a mostly underground realm of dragons, where flight is constrained; and Samaragd, a domain of serpents far above the deepest crevices in which they prefer to crawl.

For ages, the two gods have maintained this truce, each unwilling to expend the strength to oust the other. Still, Tiamat craves the open lands and the peaks that claw at the sky, where her dragons might spread their wings. She spies constantly upon Samaragd, orders her dragons to expand the tunnels below, and sends darksworn to prey upon the outsiders of Tytherion's outer isles so that Zehir cannot someday call upon them. She waits, as only an immortal can, to claim all of Tytherion.

Being somewhat intelligent, Zehir undoubtedly is aware of Tiamat's intentions. What precautions he has taken, as he winds through the tunnels of the upper mesas, only he knows.

A SCARCITY OF SOULS

Most sources maintain that Azharul contains few mortal spirits, exalted or otherwise, for Tiamat prefers interacting with nonmortal beings; she cannot be

bothered even with those exalted that find their way through the indigo veil.

Anyone who rightly considers Tiamat's covetousness should see this deception for what it is, and yet—by playing up her innate draconic haughtiness—she has convinced priests and scholars that she cares little for mortal souls. In truth, Tiamat's worshipers are hers, and the Dragon Queen never surrenders her possessions. By spreading her exalted throughout the twisting caverns of Azharul, trading them as pawns among her exarchs and consorts, or even locking them away for millennia at a time, Tiamat makes Azharul's population of souls appear far smaller than it is.

DARKSWORN SET FREE

A common belief is that souls that pass through the indigo veil to take their place as the Dragon Queen's exalted are left largely to their own devices. Sources claim that Tiamat asks little of her darksworn, as long as they offer fealty. This is not a complete falsehood as much as an extreme exaggeration. Tiamat does allow darksworn the leeway to do as they please, but only to keep them occupied until she needs them. In fact, at any given time, more than half of Tiamat's exalted are operating in her direct service: guarding holy sites, hunting particular enemies, retrieving an artifact or a bit of knowledge, and spying on rivals. Because

Tiamat keeps these agents secret from one another and gives them opportunities to pursue their own agendas, each believes it is one of Tiamat's chosen few, assuming that the rest of the darksworn are engaging in their own activities.

This deceit ensures that Tiamat's enemies underestimate the eyes and hands she has scouring the planes, and the lie is aimed as fully at her own servitors as at her foes. Not only does their ignorance mean that they cannot betray her other endeavors, but the belief that their afterlife is largely their own attracts certain worshipers who, though avaricious, might otherwise turn toward other gods.

THE DRAGON QUEEN'S REDOUBT

Some texts describe Tiamat's lair as a great mountain-top fortress, with five looming watchtowers shaped like the heads and necks of sentinel dragons. Others say that the so-called Caverns of Fiery Splendor, a winding complex of stone ramparts and flowing magma, is her true lair.

Both statements are true—and neither is. The fortress is the gateway to the Caverns of Fiery Splendor, a broad entryway through which even the largest dragon can swoop, swiftly making a journey that would otherwise require hours of wending through the various catacombs. Guarded by Tiamat's fiercest warriors, the fortress is nearly impregnable.



In the Caverns of Fiery Splendor, Tiamat holds audience with those she deigns to see. Of course, no creature as paranoid as Tiamat would slumber where others know she can be found. Thus, while these passageways make up a portion of her lair, her true inner sanctum—her “bedchamber” and the most precious parts of her hoard—are in a hidden catacomb beyond those caverns.

EVILS WITHOUT EXCEPTION

In the depths of the Caverns of Fiery Splendor stands a pair of adamantine doors that are over a hundred feet tall and covered in mystic sigils. Astral travelers glimpsing the doors through scrying rituals have speculated as to what might lie beyond, from bound primordial, to treasures worth worlds, to Tiamat’s own offspring. They are wrong.

Most mortals believe that all evil dragons worship Tiamat above the other gods. Most mortals are wrong, too. Since she is the god of dragons, as well as of greed, envy, and vengeful anger—everything that defines evil dragons—it’s true that the overwhelming majority of evil dragons worship her. Still, one evil dragon out of twenty is devoted to another deity: A ravager reveres Gruumsh, perhaps, or an ambitious schemer venerates Asmodeus. Tiamat can’t send servitors to destroy all such traitors while they live, but she can attempt to claim their souls once they’re dead—at least the souls of those who are bound for another deity’s dominion. She has a veritable web of divinations throughout the Plane Above, which alert her whenever an evil dragon’s soul appears and makes its way toward another deity’s dominion. Then Tiamat or one of her exarchs sets out to intercept that treasonous soul before it reaches its destination.

This is what waits beyond Tiamat’s adamantine doors: the exalted soulforms of evil dragons devoted to other gods, caged eternally in a prison strewn with warding and other magic that thwarts divinations. The souls of evil dragons that end up as outsiders—failed exalted—are not worthy of joining her special enemies behind the adamantine doors. After all, they are merely mortal; they perish. Tiamat is happy, though, when her allies and servitors eliminate traitorous outsiders wherever they’re found in the Astral Sea.

SAMARAGD, THE SERPENT’S KINGDOM

From the chasms that form Tytherion’s blackened heart, a belt of cracked badlands and arid steppes stretches for miles. Sheer crevices—not as deep as those at the center, but formidable enough—slash the land like wounds in a desiccated corpse, and jagged peaks turn scree-covered slopes and imposing cliffs toward the rest of the domain. Dead trees and dried brush suggest a distant age when life once

thrived, but today they signal only death’s ubiquitous presence.

Light is as foreign to these dusty reaches as is hope, and equally unwelcome. The glowing magma that illuminates Azharul is absent here, except in a few of the deepest crevices. The occasional flicker of lightning and the brush fires it ignites are the realm’s only natural illumination.

And much of this realm is far from natural. From the flatlands, great obelisks protrude, graven with sigils and imagery in honor of the Midnight Serpent, Zehir. Ziggurats rise, step by step, toward a sky forever cloaked in night—great shrines from which the screams of sacrifices roll to shame the thunder. Ridges and the sheerest cliffs are carved with precarious steps and gaping doorways. Flanked by columns chiseled from the native stone, these entryways lead into the twisting labyrinth that honeycombs Tytherion’s outer reaches. Not all who dwell here can see in the dark, so torches and braziers flicker, casting fearsome shadows upon the stone and sickening smoke into the air.

This is Samaragd, kingdom of the serpent god Zehir.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

Zehir’s realm is notable for containing a greater number of nonsentient or semisentient serpentine monsters than intelligent exalted and servitors. The monsters might be the souls of exalted who have displeased Zehir, or they might be newly made magic beasts. Of the wildly diverse varieties of serpent monsters, some serve Zehir’s exalted priests, while others roam wild.

Among the multitudes of serpents, Zehir’s exalted busy themselves by preying on the weak, fighting for status, and raising ziggurats. The lowest of the low are the exalted of other deities separated from their dominions and captured by Zehir’s forces or purchased from slavers. Enemy exalted spend their days performing slave labor in poisoned agony until their souls expire. Next up the ladder are Tiamat’s exalted, captured during the incessant skirmishing in the dark passageways between the realms. Tiamat’s exalted provide greater amusement. Since they will be punished horribly by Tiamat for failure when they return to life in her realm, their agonies offer meaty satisfaction to Zehir’s exalted, which the suffering of foreign exalted that die only once cannot match.

The bulk of Samaragd’s exalted population is known as “worms.” These creatures are mostly mammalian worshipers of Zehir (primarily humans, elves, and tieflings), along with yuan-ti and reptilian worshipers that haven’t managed to become priests. The priest caste is composed mainly of yuan-ti and sentient serpent monsters, though worms occasionally carve cunning paths into the priesthood. Conspiracy





and murder stand in for teamwork and accomplishment, because, as a rule, only by disgracing or eliminating one's superiors does one rise to a higher position. Worms compete for the priests' attention, priests compete for the favor of high priests, and high priests maneuver for the attention of Zehir's exarchs. Only two laws exist: A worm must not murder a priest, and all must obey the will of Zehir.

Daily existence is a monotony of toil for exalted that are not currently engaged in murdering one another for social advancement. The worms of the outer villages labor at the command of the priests, constructing new temples and expanding existing villages and underground passageways. On occasion, they "accidentally" wander into Azharul to test Tiamat's defenses.

Since Tytherion has no sun, moon, or stars, the priest caste keeps time by administering precisely calculated poisons to specific victims. When the priests want the "hours" to drag on, they choose a victim whose organs will last a long time. When they want time to move quickly, they choose a worm whose physiological failings are clear to all. Woe to the worm whose pace of death perfectly matches the high priests' timekeeping needs. The exalted spend hours each "day" attending rites and sacrifices. When an exalted falls behind in the conspiracy curve, it often becomes the next sacrifice, reawakening and having to work its way back up from wormhood.

Though they lead a foul existence, Zehir's exalted continue to labor as demanded, the lowest hoping to impress the priests, and the priests wanting to impress the exarchs. They do this not merely out of fear, but because Zehir or his exarchs occasionally elevate those that they find truly impressive, giving those lucky few not only status but power. Some are sent beyond Tytherion, sometimes beyond the Astral Sea, as messengers, emissaries, or assassins, accomplishing Zehir's will without needing to grovel in the darkness.

HOUSES OF THE UNHOLY

Before the coming of Tiamat and the division of Tytherion into two domains, Zehir's priest caste occupied the lowest reaches of the dominion. The commoners, not yet known as worms, dwelt in the highlands atop the mesas and on the mountain slopes. The priests had great temples constructed above, where they would go to perform ceremonies and sacrifices, because common exalted were not welcome below.

For these reasons, Tiamat invaded the depths first, targeting the priests while granting the lower castes time to pull back to higher bastions. The priests were eventually forced to retreat as well, ceding the depths to the dragons

and holding the high ground above. It's possible that both gods and all of Tytherion's exalted would be happier with a simple trade, granting Zehir and the serpents the depths, and Tiamat and the dragons the open heights, but neither god would admit such a desire to the other.

Currently, Zehir's priest caste dwells primarily in the great temples inside the deepest catacombs that encroach neither on Azharul nor on Zehir's personal labyrinth of darkened corridors. The rest of the Midnight Serpent's darksworn dwell in the hovels and smaller structures surrounding the great temples, or in the higher levels of the underground.

HUNTING FOR SACRIFICES

As a break from the enforced monotony of their day-to-day life in Samaragd, Zehir's exalted frequently form "hunting parties" that travel to the Scales (Tytherion's archipelago) and to the Astral Sea, seeking outsiders, other mortals, and the exalted of other gods for sacrifice. Outsiders are the lowest grade of victim. They can't enter Tytherion, so they must be sacrificed at impromptu ritual sites or on permanent altars maintained in the border islands. Exalted of any other deity make splendid sacrifices, and depending on the ritual season and Zehir's needs, mortals sometimes count for even more.

If a mortal is kept alive within Tytherion for several weeks, its personality becomes warped by one of the dominion's two gods, Tiamat or Zehir. Mortals who "swim with Zehir" are sacrificed soon after they begin to manifest the Midnight Serpent's traits. Mortals whose psyches are scarred by Tiamat, however, are kept alive until the moment when the god's personality entirely takes over but the mortal hasn't yet been imbued with any of her divine power. A minor aspect of Tiamat squirming beneath sacrificial knives is a perfect sacrifice to the glory of Zehir.

The priests must maintain a constant stream of sacrifices to Zehir. Only murder satisfies his needs, and if the populace cannot provide enemies to die a second death upon the altars, one of the exalted must serve instead. Death is usually temporary for Zehir's exalted inside Tytherion, but in this circumstance, it's final. Given this pressure, exalted of Zehir sometimes use the god's dominion ships to hunt down mortal vessels, particularly ones already operating as pirate ships. If the mortals aboard fight well, they are given a chance at life. The priests give their new recruits a virulent but slow-acting poison, telling the hapless mortals that if they die from the poison, their souls belong to Zehir. They are informed that they will be given a temporary antidote in a month's time if they return to Tytherion with captives for the priests to sacrifice: The greater the number of captives, the longer the dose of antidote will last. In this fashion, the unluckiest pirates of the Astral Sea spend the poisoned twilight of their final lives carving paths of carnage for the Midnight Serpent.

MAJOR AREAS

A smattering of communities exists throughout Samaragd, each based around a temple, whether on the surface or below. Presented here are a few such places that stand out, along with important features of Samaragd of which mortal sages might have heard.

AMUN-ATL

Located directly above Zehir's labyrinth, the ziggurat of Amun-Atl (*Manual of the Planes*, page 110) is Sama-

ragd's largest temple. It is ruled by Atlathessk, the serpent god's infamous yuan-ti exarch.

ENNEK-VUL

The largest of Samaragd's cliff-face temples, Ennek-Vul can be seen for miles. Its great entrance resembles the yawning maw of a serpent, and the stairs that rise toward it could accommodate a congregation of giants. Said to be the first temple constructed in Tytherion, Ennek-Vul fell out of use thousands of years ago when the Midnight Serpent offered it as a home to his greatest servant, whose name is commonly given as Merrshaulk.

THE LABYRINTH

Although some sages refer to all the winding passageways beneath Samaragd as the Labyrinth, the exalted of Tytherion use the term more specifically. To them, it refers to the maze of tunnels in which Zehir dwells, coiling and slithering through supernatural darkness while thinking alien thoughts and plotting convoluted schemes. Legend tells that only the most potent magic can create the slightest light within the Labyrinth, and that Zehir shares these tunnels with his most loyal darksworn, who have been transformed into shapes incomprehensible to mortal minds.

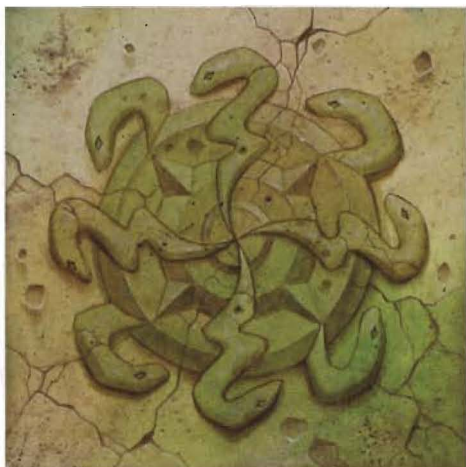
Supposedly, this complex has dozens of entrances, each so well hidden that only the gods can find it. A few legends suggest that not all the entrances lie within Tytherion; instead, some allow Zehir easy access to the Scales, or even to the Shadowfell and the mortal realm. The approximate locations of only two entrances are known: One lies beneath Amun-Atl, and the other on a cliff face overlooking the Obelisk of Night (see below).

THE MURDER PIT

This gaping pit near the Obelisk of Night appears to be a great dark pool filled with viscous blackness. Said to be bottomless, the pit connects to none of Tytherion's other passages. According to legend and to Zehir's secret dogmas, by listening at the pit, those that use the proper meditative rituals can hear echoes—and occasionally see brief images—of any murder occurring anywhere in the cosmos.

THE OBELISK OF NIGHT

The Obelisk of Night was present when Zehir first drew Tytherion from the shadows of the Astral Sea and claimed it as his own. This towering monolith of smooth, ink-black stone rises from a crater near the border of Samaragd. Its surface is carved with winding symbols that vaguely resemble Supernal. These sigils resist all magical attempts at translation and seem, on occasion, to shift and waver. Mortals and exalted who study them for too long go blind. Rumor says that Zehir spends days at a stretch examining the Obelisk of Night from within his Labyrinth, perhaps



struggling to translate the symbols or contemplating ancient secrets he has already interpreted. No one dares ask which it might be.

THE RAVENOUS WOOD

This place is the largest of Samaragd's copses of dead trees, dried brush, and desiccated brambles. Navigating the Ravenous Wood is nearly impossible, for the thick, flesh-tearing thorns shift deliberately, disorienting travelers and closing off pathways. Zehir's darksworn believe that the brambles reach out to snag passersby, dragging them within. They also believe that the Ravenous Wood hides the entrance to the lair of a terrible horror that predates or defies both Tiamat and Zehir.

TABROL-AKLA

Several of Zehir's temples are built on the cliffs of the great chasms that plunge into Tytherion's depths. Tabrol-Akla has the dubious distinction of being the lowest of these, hovering near the border of Azharul. Unsruek, the exalted soul of an abnormally intelligent troglodyte, is the temple's high priest and one of Zehir's most potent darksworn. Similarly, the other priests who dwell in Tabrol-Akla and the warriors that serve them are among the most formidable of Samaragd, because Zehir's exalted believe that if Tiamat's forces ever move openly against Zehir, Tabrol-Akla will be one of their first targets.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Samaragd offers a vast array of story, plot, and adventure opportunities, primarily for epic tier characters. This domain is home to one of the most overtly evil societies in the known planes, ruled by a zealous caste of beings whose entire purpose is sacrificing not only lives, but souls, to their dark god. The characters might come to rescue a specific mortal or exalted from the clutches of the serpent-priests before it can be slaughtered. Alternatively, the characters might have been taken for sacrifice, or dumped in Samaragd by a mysterious portal (the priests sometimes

cause portals to Tytherion to assume other hues, in hopes of trapping new victims) and forced to find some means of escape. The characters might need to obtain information available only by listening at the Murder Pit, or hope to record or decipher the peculiar writings of the Obelisk of Night. An assassins' guild dedicated to Zehir might be run by an exalted soul from Tytherion, forcing the characters to travel to Samaragd to end the organization's evil efforts.

Of course, the characters might go to Samaragd to challenge the greatest foes. Zehir has potent exarchs, and a truly powerful, well-prepared, and well-informed group might just be able to challenge the serpent-god himself. Whatever happens to Samaragd at that point—whether it's claimed by one of the Midnight Serpent's exarchs, conquered by Tiamat, or affected by something else entirely—opens the door to further epic adventure.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The following terrain features can be found throughout Samaragd's high mountains, deep pits, and terrible cliff temples.

CONSTRUCTED TERRAIN

Altar: Stepping onto an altar requires 1 extra square of movement, and the altar provides cover. Some larger altars are more than 1 square across; depending on how covered by serpentine carvings an altar is, each square of it might qualify as difficult terrain.

Altar, Sacrificial: As above, but these altars are enchanted to prevent sacrifices from escaping. A prone character on one of these altars cannot stand (save ends).

Arrow Slits: Few of Samaragd's structures have full-sized windows, instead using arrow slits (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 66).

FANTASTIC TERRAIN

Blood Rock: Parts of Samaragd near the altars or the lairs of certain monsters have become blood rock (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67).

Carpet of Serpents: These patches of ground are covered with swarms of serpents (or other venomous creatures) that dart in and out of various hidden dens.

Effect: A carpet of serpents is difficult terrain. When a creature starts its turn in a carpet of serpents area, it takes 5 poison damage per tier, or 10 poison damage per tier if it is prone.

Usage: Combine a carpet of serpents with creatures that have poison resistance or immunity, or as part of a trap that drops the characters into a chamber that has this feature.

Choking Vapors: These fumes rise from volcanic vents, venomous incense—or both, in the case of rare sacrifices involving yuan-ti priests that expect to rise

again after dying within the vent where the sacrifice is conducted.

Effect: These squares are lightly obscured, and creatures in them must hold their breath or suffocate. (See “Suffocation,” *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, page 159.) Creatures that have immunity or resistance to poison are immune to this effect.

Usage: Add complexity to an encounter by introducing the vapors after a fight starts. Or have a creature that has poison resistance use the vapors to hide in while it attacks from concealment.

Cursed Obelisk: These black, stone obelisks are usually covered in ruins and stand between 2 and 20 squares high.

Effect: While a nonworshiper of Zehir is within a number of squares of an obelisk equal to the obelisk’s height, that creature takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks, and gains vulnerable 2 per tier to all damage.

Usage: A chamber full of these objects could provide cover to the characters’ enemies, while the characters take the penalty for being nonworshippers. The penalty to attack rolls allows enemy skirmishers to take more risk from opportunity attacks, and all enemies will benefit from the extra damage they can deal because of the characters’ vulnerability.

Dried Brambles and Brush: This vegetation functions as razorvine (*Manual of the Planes*, page 22).

Earthen Maw: Parts of the broken badlands open and close like jaws, seeking to snare passersby.

Effect: Whenever a creature without earth walk remains on the same square of earthen maw throughout its turn, it takes 5 damage per tier and is grabbed (escape DC moderate based on the encounter level).

Usage: Use earthen maw terrain to force the characters to make difficult movement choices, or to funnel them into a disadvantageous position.

Pocket of Night: In the darkest places of Samaragd, the shadows have an unnatural weight, and no natural light can penetrate the darkness.

Effect: When creating magical light, a character in a pocket of night must make an ability check using his or her class’s primary ability score against a hard DC. On a failure, the magical light fails to illuminate anything; on a success, it casts only dim light.

Usage: Use a pocket of night with creatures that have darkvision and powers that take advantage of the concealment this terrain offers.

Soul Venom: These areas of Samaragd contain tainted atmosphere.

Effect: While in an area of soul venom, a creature gains vulnerable 5 poison per tier, or vulnerable 10 poison per tier while bloodied. Creatures that have immunity or resistance to poison are immune to these effects.

Usage: Add patches of soul venom to an encounter with medusas or other poison-using creatures that

have poison resistance or immunity to give them a bigger punch.

Venomous Air: These are clouds of nigh-undetectable poisons that hang in the air and amplify other poison attacks.

Effect: When a creature within an area of venomous air is hit with a poison attack, it takes 1d6 extra poison damage per tier.

Usage: Use venomous air in an encounter with a large number of weaker creatures or minions that have poison attacks to turn them into a greater threat.

OUTDOOR TERRAIN

Cliffs: The cliffs of Samaragd are sheer and precarious. Handholds and footholds exist, but they betray the climber who tries to use them. Regardless of the level of adventure, use hard DCs for climbing.

Rain, Deluge: Precipitation is rare, but when it comes, it comes in torrents. Rain makes an area difficult terrain, causes flying creatures to become slowed, and makes all squares in the area heavily obscured.

Sand and Dust: Much of the desert of Samaragd is difficult terrain.

Slope, Steep: The slopes of Samaragd’s peaks are steep, requiring Athletics checks to climb (easy DC, or medium DC if the slope is also covered in scree). On a failed check, a character slides 2d8 squares downslope, taking 1 damage per square of movement, and falls prone. Additionally, pull, push, and slide effects increase by 2 squares in a downslope direction and are reduced by 1 square in an upslope direction.

Smoke: Areas of smoke (put forth by volcanic vents and some braziers) are heavily obscured.

Wind, Arid: On occasion, the hot winds that blow across Samaragd’s deserts are more than merely uncomfortable. These gusts drain the moisture from living creatures, causing thirst to set in and worsen after hours rather than days. (See “Thirst,” *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, page 159.) In addition, all nonmagical liquids kept in nonmagical containers are destroyed (evaporated) after 1 hour of exposure.

THE FATE OF THE EXALTED

Death is frequent (and often brutal) throughout Samaragd, but it isn’t necessarily final. When Zehir’s exalted are slain, they normally rise again after a week or so, resuming their endless toil for the glory of the Midnight Serpent. This cycle of resurrection isn’t perfect, however; a minority of deaths are permanent, with the souls going on to whatever waits beyond the Astral Sea, returning to the cycle of life in the mortal realm, or meeting some other unknown fate.

The deaths of those souls who perish screaming on the Zehir’s altars are permanent. Their essence is poisoned and consumed to sate Zehir’s unending hunger.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Most encounters in Samaragd are linked, thematically if not directly, to the realm's ophidian master. Many of its monsters are serpentine, others are venomous, and still others are known for dealing swift and hidden death.

Level 21 Encounter (XP 18,800)

- ◆ 1 dark naga (level 21 elite controller, MM 194)
- ◆ 1 giant mummy (level 21 brute, MM 193)
- ◆ 1 yuan-ti anathema (level 21 elite skirmisher, MM 271)
- ◆ 1 altar of zealotry (advanced to level 20 lurker trap, DMG 92)

Level 26 Encounter (XP 47,800)

- ◆ 1 primordial hydra (level 25 solo brute, MM 165)
- ◆ 2 yuan-ti anathemas (level 21 elite skirmisher, MM 271)

THE SCALES: TYTHERION'S ARCHIPELAGO

The Scales of Night, or simply the Scales, are the border islands radiating out from the heart of darkness that is Tytherion proper. The archipelago contains scores of islands, ranging in size from several miles across to little more than a slight rise above the surrounding Astral Sea. Those nearest the indigo veil are usually chunks of broken stone, dusty desert, and rocky badland, like Tytherion's outer rim. Farther from the dominion, the isles show greater signs of life, sprouting thick jungles that thrive despite the thin soil covering the rock. The foliage does not grow high, and numerous clearings remain, either naturally vacant or blasted empty, but the canopy is thick enough to hide those who want to remain unseen.

Hiding is essential, even for intrepid adventurers, to avoid unwanted attacks from Tiamat's or Zehir's vile creatures. The outsiders who dwell on these islands face death from the skies if they linger too long in the open.

Although the border islands lie beyond the color veil, deities throughout the Astral Sea still offer the inhabitants of these isles a portion of protection, considering them to be—at least to an extent—their own people. Tiamat and Zehir disagree with that assessment.

The Dragon Queen believes that the outsiders traveling to Tytherion that made it no farther than the Scales aren't worthy of exaltation. She sees them as failures and weaklings unworthy of sharing her domain. Not only does she not protect the people of the Scales, she actively encourages her exalted and darksworn to prey upon them, honing their skills in combat and hunting for the sheer sport of it. Dragons and draconic creatures haunt the skies above the

Scales, frequently alone but sometimes in numbers so great they blot out the glow of Tytherion's veil. All too often, these flyers choose the "scorched earth" method of hunting, obliterating entire reaches of land with breath weapons and destructive magic.

The Midnight Serpent is less concerned with the outsiders of the Scales; in fact, since they have proved unable to join him, aid him, or threaten him in any real way, he's indifferent to their existence. Zehir's evil darksworn hunt outsiders not at their god's behest, but because they know they can. Some are murdered in honor of Zehir; others die purely to sate the bloodlust or boredom of their killers. Snakes and serpentine monstrosities slither beneath the jungle's undergrowth or within the crevices of the badlands, accompanied by other minions of Zehir that, though humanoid, are no less cold-blooded than the serpents.

Nor are the exalted of these two deities content with tormenting only outsiders. Though the gods maintain a sullen peace within Tytherion proper, no such rules or boundaries apply within the Scales. Combat, ambush, and attempted massacre between the forces of Tiamat and Zehir are common here. Usually, such conflicts erupt when darksworn of Azharul stumble across those of Samaragd, or vice versa. In a significant minority of occasions, however, the bloodshed is planned ahead of time. Exalted beings holding grudges lie in wait for their rivals.

The constant violence of the Scales does not encourage the long-term survival of large communities or aboveground structures. Endless strafing runs by draconic exalted obliterate all but the sturdiest or best hidden of edifices, and they scatter (or incinerate) aboveground villages as swiftly as they appear. Although Zehir's darksworn aren't as broadly devastating as Tiamat's, few of the Scales' inhabitants (whether outsiders or travelers from beyond) want to be found. Competition for resources and safe living space in the Scales is great enough that nearly everyone has made enemies; between deliberate assassination attempts and murders committed by bored Samaragd exalted, average individuals are safer if they are not known to reside in a specific area or structure.

For this reason, the bulk of the Scales' inhabitants do not dwell aboveground at all. The islands are riddled with a series of underground tunnels and caverns, within which the populace largely dwells. These passageways aren't as ubiquitous or complex as the systems within Tytherion, and not all islands are as replete with them as are others. As a rule, the desert and badlands isles have larger systems of passageways and larger individual caverns; the jungle isles have fewer passageways and caverns, and those that exist are narrower, but they wind about with greater frequency, making them more difficult to navigate.

Other factors beyond the convoluted nature of the caves make them confusing to traverse. The various

isles of the Scales are mystically linked, sometimes to another isle and sometimes to other locales. Thus, while most of these catacombs follow traditional rules of nature, some deposit travelers in caves on other islands, in caverns deep in the rocky earth of Tytherion, or in the mortal realm. It's said that the shrewdest inhabitants of the Scales, and a small number of Zehir's darksworn, have mastered and mapped a portion of these "portal tunnels," which they use to navigate the archipelago. Most individuals, however, including those who have studied the tunnels, can reliably find few, if any, of these locations.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

As mentioned above, most of the Scales' inhabitants live belowground. They might gather in small, semi-permanent communities that call either one great cavern or several linked caves their home. These entrenchments are a combination long-term camp and defensive fortification. Here, the inhabitants can take shelter from dragon raids and similar threats, while using guerrilla tactics to strike back at foes that might appear in manageable numbers.

Entrenchments normally take the form of simple camps within the tunnels, with various sleeping mats, tattered blankets, and perhaps a leather lean-to providing the only sense of personal space. Occasionally, camps that have existed for some time feature small structures—built primarily of wood or of loose-stacked stone—within the housing cavern. Nearly all have multiple exits, both to the surface and leading deeper into the caves, so that the populace can retreat easily when attacked, move farther into the darkness to hide if the entrenchment is breached, and reappear swiftly to deliver a counterattack.

These communities are governed by the strongest warriors or by whoever displays the strength to protect the entrenchment (often by rebuffing anyone who challenges his or her right to lead). Skirmishes between entrenchments are common when one encroaches on another, threatening to take away any of its tunnels or its resources, such as edible plants or pools of fresh water.

Even so, a scattering of communities and structures does survive aboveground. They are hidden deep in the thickest jungles of the outer isles, where the dragons cannot easily spot them from above or conveniently navigate the close-packed trees. In such places, a few wooden villages and the occasional stone temple or ziggurat still stand. These communities are especially likely to war with anyone who encroaches on their territory, hoping to exterminate all newcomers before their presence can be revealed to others.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Scales provide substantial adventuring opportunities, with the advantage that their challenges can

be set at paragon as well as epic levels. The characters might arrive by accident, shipwrecked here or side-tracked on their way to Tytherion proper. They might appear within one of the isles while exploring deep caverns in the mortal realm, if they happen to stumble through one of the "portal tunnels" mentioned above.

Adventures in the Scales don't have to be accidental—the characters might come deliberately for any number of reasons. Because these isles house few communities and those that do exist are small and rugged, githyanki pirates rarely bother to raid them, which makes the Scales a viable hiding place for creatures seeking to avoid those astral marauders. Adventurers could be seeking a secret way into Tytherion, hunting specific servants of Tiamat or Zehir, or searching for treasures lost by prior visitors. Alternatively, they might be hiding from the powers of Tytherion, hoping to find the time to regroup before returning to, or utterly escaping from, that dark dominion.

Of course, the characters might be trying to assist the outsiders of the Scales, who constantly face danger from every direction. From the strafing runs of the dragons to the poisonous murders by Zehir's darksworn, plenty of evil to be destroyed lurks in the Scales.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Across the various isles, the Scales experience all the environmental characteristics—mundane and mystical alike—appropriate for rocky desert, badlands, and jungle regions.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Although encounters with all sorts of humanoids are possible here, the characters' foes are likely to be dragons and draconic servitors of Tiamat or reptilian followers of Zehir. Certain plant creatures appear on the jungle isles as well.

Level 16 Encounter (XP 7,700)

- ◆ 2 shadow snakes (level 16 skirmisher, MM 240)
 - ◆ 1 six-fingered slayer (level 15 lurker, *Manual of the Planes* 133)*
 - ◆ 1 yuan-ti malison incanter (level 15 artillery, MM 269)
 - ◆ 5 dark acolytes (level 15 minion, *Manual of the Planes* 133)*
 - ◆ 1 warthorn battlebriar (level 14 controller, MM 28)
- *Although these are written as followers of Graz'zt in the source material, treat them as worshipers of Zehir for this purpose. Alignment is evil; change languages to Common and Supernal, and resist 10 psychic to resist 10 poison (six-fingered slayer only).

Level 24 Encounter (XP 30,600)

- ◆ 2 bluespawn godslayers (level 22 elite brute, MM 89)
- ◆ 1 elder blue dragon (level 20 solo artillery, MM 79)

THE DEEP ASTRAL SEA

THE ASTRAL Sea seems empty only because it is so huge. Thousands of islands and shards are scattered throughout the silver sea like oases in a great desert. As many as a dozen civilizations, great by the standards of the world, are scattered through the wide expanse of the silver sea. Most of these establish themselves on astral motes or in the ruins of shattered divine dominions. Others, such as the couatls, fashion their own palaces in the astral clouds, while the githyanki deliberately choose a nomadic existence pivoting on a single central point.

This chapter details four races of the Astral Sea that do not reside in the deities' dominions, among them the two greatest raider threats of the Plane Above—the githyanki and the quom.

It continues with stories and adventure hooks associated with the shattered dominions—places the gods have left behind or otherwise ruined.

Aside from the shattered dominions, many smaller fragments drift in the Astral Sea—motes and shards that offer endless variety for paragon and epic tier exploration and dungeon crawling.

This chapter presents the following topics.

- ♦ **Races of the Astral Sea:** The cloud palaces of the couatls, the history of the githyanki, the origin and philosophy of the maruts, and the quom who live only to re-create and avenge their dead god.
- ♦ **Shattered Dominions:** Discussions of Carceri, Erishani, Kalandurren, Pandemonium, and Shom, including one short adventure set in Erishani and an encounter with astral giants in Shom.
- ♦ **Motes in the Astral Sea:** Glimpses of ten locales in the deep Astral Sea that you can use as springboards for adventures that take place far from the purview of the deities and other denizens of the Plane Above.



RALPH HORSLEY



RACES OF THE ASTRAL SEA

The deities, their servants, and the outsiders that have failed to join the dominions are not the Astral Sea's only inhabitants. Several powerful races are native to the Plane Above, weaving their separate cultures as arbiters, mercenaries, and predators. The most powerful and numerous are the couatls, the githyanki, the maruts, and the quom.

COUATLS

The resplendent winged, feathered serpents known as couatls fly serenely above the notional surface of the Astral Sea. Demons, devils, and githyanki scuttle for cover when they hear the searing sound of couatl wings flapping overhead.

Folklore portrays the feathered serpents as selfless paragons of virtue. Those who actually meet them discover a harsher truth. Couatls are self-obsessed strivers that just happen to have chosen all the right enemies. They pursue the forces of evil as part of a ceaseless struggle for rank. Although they're happy to take credit for any good this does for the universe at large, that is hardly their main concern.

OUTLOOK AND INTERACTION

Couatls refer to the pursuit of status as the Great Chase. A couatl's honor, worth, and influence can be measured by the number of kills it racks up, directly and indirectly. Couatls commemorate their victories by seizing and displaying souvenirs. To mark a victory against an overtly monstrous creature, a couatl takes a choice part of the creature home to its trophy hall, where it might display a demon's horn or a stuffed and mounted beholder. When its foe is more human-like in shape, the couatl confines itself to taking treasure and equipment. A trophy hall must be tasteful, never gruesome.

Functionaries recruited from the Astral Sea's population of rootless outsiders carefully make lists of their masters' kills. They stand ready to recite them ritually at any time.

A couatl claims the deaths not only of enemies it personally dispatches, but also of those killed by its servants. The Great Chase's unwritten rules allow couatls to treat members of other races as their designated agents, so an ambitious couatl scours the Astral Sea for likely proteges.

To the stouthearted astral wayfarer, the sudden appearance of a couatl might represent salvation from certain doom—or an annoyingly imperious interruption of important plans. Often a couatl will introduce itself to a new prospect by snatching the creature from the jaws of certain defeat. (The mere

appearance of a couatl is often enough to send evil astral denizens of lesser power scuttling to safety.) The couatl gently grasps the wounded creature between its opalescent teeth, ferries it to the deck of a ship or safer ground, and tends to its injuries. The rescuer introduces itself and reveals what it has learned by watching the creature from afar. Before distrustful words can be fully uttered, it promises a bountiful material reward for the minor services it will eventually request in return for its momentous rescue.

Couatls prize adventurers as retainers. Bringing a promising new adventuring band into the fold wins status all by itself. Since adventurers are rare, most couatls have to settle for less desirable servitors, such as mercenaries, ex-pirates, or wandering soulforms.

Under constant pressure to win favor, a couatl can become overzealous when it comes across a likely prospect. Couatls don't take refusal lightly, sometimes resorting to subterfuge, veiled threats, or similar forms of mild coercion.

Working with a couatl has its benefits. A couatl patron shares its wealth, spending from its treasure hoard to finance new missions against evil. It might perform additional rescues—though it hates to let its servitors grow soft or dependent. A couatl mentor can also make important introductions, granting entry into the politics of the divine and semidivine.

Although sellswords and astral riffraff might covet positions as couatl servitors, true heroes come to chafe at couatls' attentions. The feathered serpents feel no need to justify themselves to inferiors. They abruptly yank part-time allies away from their current business when the couatls need missions performed, or they unashamedly lecture their adopted adventurers on their perceived tactical failings. Some assign other servants to monitor their allies' behavior, all the better to second-guess them.

Characters who value their freedom could find themselves physically resisting a couatl's commands. The average couatl regards such skirmishes as a regrettable consequence of firm discipline. It defends itself vigorously, perhaps summoning other members of its entourage to assist. When fighting recalcitrant disciples, it never strikes to kill. No matter how serious the break, couatls believe that any ruptured relationship can be repaired. Eventually, they confidently believe, their mortal followers will see the error of their ways and gratefully bow down before them.

Wise adventurers learn to persuade their way out of sticky situations involving a demanding couatl. The serpents' constant quest for status leaves them vulnerable to flattery, and they're also open to negotiation, such as someone making a promise to do a greater deed for them later if left alone now.

CLOUDLANDS

Couatls live in floating communities called cloudlands. These edifices of rosy-colored celestial matter slowly spin across the Astral Sea, far above its horizon. Though they look insubstantial and fanciful, cloudlands and their structures are quite solid.

The most magnificent of these is the Cloud Court, the palace of the couatls' Glorious Feathered Emperor, Nahua. Configured as a series of soft-edged concentric rings, it ascends ever higher toward the center. At the midpoint of the insubstantial-looking complex floats a stepped pyramid. From inside its hazy walls, the emperor oversees his dominion, surrounded by the golden trappings of mythic wealth.

The Cloud Court's stunning beauty is a hazard to mortal sanity. Once they set foot there, normal mortals often desperately plead to stay forever. If the petitioners are powerful combatants, a couatl courtier will be only too happy to arrange this—in exchange for a pledge of eternal service.

LIFE AND CULTURE

Couatls attend the Cloud Court on days of ceremonial observance, at the command of the emperor, and when they want to announce fresh victories against the forces of evil. Their dignity discourages them from bragging directly. Instead, they rely on poets and bards to do their crowing for them. If such tales of a couatl's exploits win the emperor's favor, the emperor permits the couatl to take up temporary residence on the Court's outer rings. When that same couatl is eclipsed, it is asked in hushed tones to vacate the ring so that a new favorite might take its place.

If a courtier fears that it will soon be ejected—or if an aspirant believes that it is on the verge of an invitation to the Court—it will redouble its attempts to score spectacular victories. This pressure might lead it to risk the lives of its servants and allies.

Efforts to undermine other couatls' victories are officially deplored; nevertheless, they are widespread. Jealous courtiers send servitors to sabotage missions, lure away allies, and steal kills. In extreme cases, couatl entourage winds up fighting each other. The couatls themselves never openly attack each other. For that, they have servitors. Occasionally, the disappearance of a fast-rising couatl leads to scurrilous whispers against its rivals, but no instance of murder between members of the Court has ever been proven.

FACTIONS

Grudges arising from the Great Chase occasionally lead to schisms in couatl society. Over time, splinter movements fade, leading to reunification with the Cloud Court. At present, two splinter groups remain active.

SPIRALS

Nahua's faction refers to one group of breakaways as "spirals" because the vertical cloudland where its self-proclaimed true emperor, Xihue (pronounced *chee-way*), dwells is named the Spiral Spire. This group maintains all the same traditions as the larger Cloud Court. The break between the two groups stems from a dispute over succession. Emperors die infrequently; when one does, he or she is replaced by the highest-ranking courtier. Nahua became emperor when his predecessor died, days after taking over from the older Xihue as vizier. Xihue claims that the previous emperor never formally replaced Xihue with Nahua as second in command, and therefore Xihue should rule the Cloud Court.

The spirals periodically suspend their version of the Great Chase to attack Nahua's loyalists. Nahua prefers to lure Xihue's followers with bribes but makes defensive war on them when necessary.

DENIERS

Nahua's court calls the second splinter faction the "deniers." This group calls Nahua's forces the "imperi-als" and refers to itself as the "reclaimers." A growing force representing perhaps one in five couatls, the reclaimers renounce the vanity and splendor of the Cloud Court. They still kill evil beings to gain admiration and influence, but they live in austere conditions and reject the accumulation of treasure and trophies. Under the tutelage of their spiritual leader, Tzotl, they daub their golden feathers with ashes and proclaim the virtues of self-denial. Second in importance to the battle against evil is the struggle to reform the Cloud Court and depose the emperor. A fifth column of covert reclaimers remains at court, working quietly to convert Nahua's followers. They uphold the values of bloodlust and austerity over pleasure and self-satisfaction.

In contrast to his tolerant attitude toward the spirals, Nahua loathes and fears the reclaimers. Tzotl and her followers hide from loyalist reprisals inside a stationary astral anomaly called the Smaze. Inside its billowing red reaches, the directional orientation of the Astral Sea is reversed. Flying creatures must painstakingly retrain themselves to navigate in it. Until they do so, they plummet downward when they attempt to ascend and spin up when they try to dive.

NAVIGATION IN THE SMAZE

Only aerial movement is possible within the walls of the Smaze. As they would in the open Astral Sea, nonflying creatures automatically acquire a fly speed of 2. Longstanding reclaimers can fly as easily within the Smaze as they can outside it. When a creature not native to the Smaze moves more than 2 squares on its turn, it grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn. After such a creature spends at least a day within the Smaze, this restriction ends.

Fearsome pirates of the Astral Sea, the githyanki raid and plunder, restrained only by their awareness that victims deprived of their belongings and their lives will be unable to produce more belongings for the githyanki to steal. Though they are arguably the finest navigators and sailors of the Astral Sea, they learned their trade late. Before they became astral sailors, they were unwilling planar warriors as slaves of the illithids.

HISTORY OF THE GITHYANKI

Centuries ago, in the years of mortal empires after the Dawn War, the githyanki were members of a race of enslaved humanoid known as gith, after the name of one of their greatest leaders. The mind flayers, whose dark empires stretched out of the Far Realm, into the Underdark, and across the mortal world, kept the gith as slaves. The illithids yearned to extend their influence throughout the planes, and their seemingly cowed servitors, the gith, became obvious candidates for training as planar soldiers. The mind flayers trained the gith as a slave army that could spearhead invasions across planar boundaries.

Unfortunately for their masters, the gith took to the military mindset without swallowing the poison pill of ultimate obedience. The slaves that were supposed to submit to the illithids rose in rebellion. The gith overpowered their masters and escaped through the worlds as they had been taught to do. Gith, the leader of the rebellion, declared an Eternal Crusade, calling her people to remain ever vigilant against the threat of the illithids from then on. (See “Tu’narath, City of Death” in *Dragon* #377 for more information.)

Since the gith were a zealous and violent lot, freedom soon erupted into civil war. The followers of Gith clung to the military traditions the mind flayers had instilled, and they wanted to put their skills to best use, building a military machine that would be able to avenge itself fully upon the illithids and the other creatures of the Far Realm. The opposition, led by a mystic named Zerthimon, thought that the time for blind militarism was over.

The leaders fought, Zerthimon won, and he and the faction calling themselves the githzerai split away from the people of Gith and moved into the Elemental Chaos. Those who chose to stay true to their militaristic ways stayed loyal to Gith, renamed themselves the githyanki, and went in the other direction, invading the Plane Above where the deities ruled.

Military discipline served the githyanki well in their desperate early years. They put their training to use and seized a few scattered astral motes, since the territories of the deities were too strong and well organized for them to confront directly. As

an offshoot of the Eternal Crusade, Gith developed a long-term plan to ensure the survival and prominence of the githyanki, embodied in what were called the three great stratagems: carving out a home base, cultivating an alliance, and refining a weapon that would enable the githyanki to hold onto what they had attained.

After decades (some say centuries), the githyanki happened upon a massive floating island. They called the island, which was the corpse of a dead god, Tu’narath. By making this place their main home and the central base for their wide-flying astral ships, the githyanki attained the first great stratagem of their eventual ascendancy in the Astral Sea.

THE FIRST GREAT STRATAGEM: TU’NARATH

Tu’narath is the capital city of the githyanki civilization. It is the fortress home of their current ruler, Vlaakith the lich-queen. Tu’narath serves as the nexus for the githyanki’s navigational charts, the supply point for their mobile shipyards, and the



major permanent settlement of githyanki culture in the Astral Sea. All of the other githyanki settlements and citadels are designed to be abandoned if superior forces should attack them; githyanki military thinking advises that it is better to preserve your troops and slay the enemy with a savage counterattack than to allow yourself to be trapped and whittled down until you are too weak to attack.

THE SECOND GREAT STRATAGEM: THE RED DRAGON PACT

The second stratagem followed soon after. Although Gith was incredibly long-lived, she could sense her life ending. She summoned her trusted advisor, an ambitious female named Vlaakith, and sought counsel. How could she be sure that the githyanki would survive after she was gone? What would give them the edge they needed to thrive, ensuring that they were strong enough to defeat all who opposed them and, in time, avenge themselves fully upon both the mind flayers and the perfidious githzerai?

Vlaakith already had ideas on this matter. Though the githyanki had no affection for the deities and no more respect than anyone sane would accord to dangerous and powerful enemies, Vlaakith had been weighing the advantages of finding a divine ally. Gith's overwhelming desire for revenge suggested an alliance with Tiamat, the god of vengeance.

In the end, Gith accomplished the second great stratagem. Employing Vlaakith as her negotiator, Gith traded herself, and the eternal soul that Gith wasn't even certain she possessed, to the Queen of Dragons. In exchange, the githyanki received a pact of mutual support with one of Tiamat's chromatic dragon races, the fiery and proud red dragons. Vlaakith's soul was thrown into the bargain, as well as the souls of all the future rulers of the githyanki.

So who benefited in the bargain? Certainly, the githyanki have thrived. Even though they quickly gained mastery of astral navigation and shipbuilding, they could always supplement the speed of their ships with winged strikers and draconic firepower. Is it possible that Tiamat made an eternal deal in which she received only a few githyanki souls and yet has not tried to find a loophole in it?

Three possibilities seem likely. First, Tiamat thought that the alliance between one of her races and the githyanki would give her a new group of powerful worshipers. She judged the githyanki as if they were normal mortals looking for a deity to reassure them and aid them. However, the githyanki are not normal mortals, and they treat Tiamat as a powerful creature that happens to have a treaty with them, not even as a trusted ally, much less as an object of worship. Second, Tiamat slanted the pact toward vengeance, ensuring that the githyanki would pay penalties if they ever gave up their

planned revenge on their former masters, the mind flayers. Third, those "few githyanki souls" happen to be the souls of all of the githyanki's rulers, and they might be a magic-rich commodity that holds far more power than Gith originally realized. Tiamat might eventually be able to take by magical force what the githyanki will not offer out of devotion.

However, that last is speculation. What is certain is that the relationship between the githyanki and the red dragons remains strong, even after millennia. Red dragons are welcomed into githyanki settlements, and Tu'narath has ample space for red dragons to make their homes. Though red dragons that do not live alongside the githyanki might not recognize them as allies, the dragons among the githyanki have linked their plans and desires to githyanki culture. It doesn't hurt that any githyanki who is teamed with a dragon shares a higher rank in society because of his or her mount.

The alliance between the githyanki and the red dragons is also apparent outside the astral realm. On the Astral Sea, many githyanki use sailing vessels as their primary mode of transportation. Dragon riders go where they like, but many dragon riders fly missions based off vessels or out of Tu'narath. When in the world, however, the githyanki must often rely on their red dragon allies for everything from protection to transportation.

THE THIRD GREAT STRATAGEM: THE SILVER SWORDS

Githyanki silver swords are the iconic symbols of githyanki power, but few know their full significance. Though many believe they are badges of honor, the truth is that some of the silver swords belonging to high-ranking officers are far more than that. Forged from more than steel and alchemical silver, the best of the silver swords contain a sliver or two of the Living Gate (page 63), the original gateway through which the Far Realm breached the Astral Sea. The githyanki keep the object of their search a secret, unlike the monomaniacal quom (page 101), who search for fragments of their dead god Lakal. Some otherwise illogical voyages of exploration are actually designed to track down new slivers of the original Living Gate as they circulate within the detritus of the Astral Sea.

Swords made with slivers of the Living Gate have no extra magical power that other races can discern. In the hands of high-ranking githyanki, however, the silver swords resonate at a different pitch when the Far Realm invades the far corners of the deep Astral Sea in force. The fact that others don't realize how often these invasions occur is due to the githyanki's savage and decisive military response to such incursions.

LIFE AND CULTURE

Under the yoke of their illithid masters, the githyanki trained in military tactics and acquired discipline and a rigid structure of rank. Thanks to Gith, they maintained these traditions once they were free.

Githyanki society is a military force organized on a massive scale. Each githyanki has his or her place in the hierarchy. Obedience to one's superiors is important, unless the superior has obviously turned against the best interest of society. Blood ties mean little. Instead, githyanki are raised in cadres, seldom knowing their parents. They bond with others of similar rank. Upon reaching adulthood, a githyanki chooses a path for her future as fits her rank and competence or has a path chosen for her, if she is judged incompetent to choose.

Even the gods of war have no hold on the githyanki imagination. The worst you can do to a githyanki is to enslave him, and to the githyanki, devotion to the gods seems tantamount to slavery. Githyanki are not fond of philosophical debate—a suggestion that devotion to the deities is no more onerous than devotion to a githyanki cadre and the values of Gith would probably be punctuated by the point of a silver sword.

Though the githyanki have chosen discipline and conquest over faith and religion, within githyanki society is a caste that serves the same role as clerics and priests in other societies. Known as the *ghustil*, these githyanki are gifted with the ability to channel power directly from Vlaakith CLVII, the ruler of the githyanki, and they can bend the nascent divine power in the Astral Sea to their will. The *ghustil* serve not only as the voice and eyes of Vlaakith in the wider Astral Sea, but also as reminders to all who see them that Vlaakith is to be obeyed. However, many common githyanki do not trust the *ghustil*. Not only do they sometimes act outside the githyanki rank structure—they justify their actions by saying they are directly connected to Vlaakith, and thus their actions are the actions of Vlaakith herself—but their manipulation of divine energy is too similar to what the clerics and paladins of the deities can do. Given the fact that the githyanki disdain religion, many believe that the *ghustil* and the powers they wield could become the basis for an attempt to twist githyanki society into something beholden to the gods.

In the millennia since the githyanki arrived in the Astral Sea, they have become excellent navigators and masters of astral travel. Many of the islands in the Astral Sea drift over time, and finding them can be difficult, even with good charts. The githyanki have no such difficulties, thanks to the magic of Tu'narath. The body of the dead god upon which the city of Tu'narath was built still radiates waves of bizarre energy that pulse out across the Astral Sea. Githyanki cartomancers have learned to read the patterns and echoes of this energy, translating that information

into the most up-to-date charts of the infinite sea. As these charts are refreshed, the captains of githyanki vessels see their own maps magically altered on the fly, ensuring that all the githyanki ships on the Astral Sea have the best navigational data. The astral charts belonging to githyanki captains are highly prized, and a captain would rather destroy such a chart than see it fall into the hands of nongithyanki.

Although the githyanki's love of raiding and conquest hearkens back to their origin as a warrior race, aggression springs from necessity. Unlike mortals, the githyanki do not seek to hang on to their conquests (with one exception, the *gul'othran*; see page 97). As consummate raiders, the githyanki know how difficult it is to defend fixed positions against supremely mobile enemies. In the Astral Sea, the githyanki choose to avoid staking themselves down as defenders of fixed positions. Tu'narath is a permanent base, but it, too, is mobile. The githyanki must gather food and supplies through plunder, because their overwhelmingly military culture and their refusal to permanently occupy terrain make it difficult for them to cultivate food and manufacture items that cannot be created on a ship or on dragonback.

OUTLOOK AND INTERACTION

Within githyanki society, everyone has his or her place, and everyone else recognizes that place. The military caste is the only major caste. Both of the smaller castes—the *mlar* (artisans, crafters, and other specialized professions) and the *glathk* (farmers and laborers)—have their own systems for determining who is less inferior to those in the lower ranks of the military.

Though it is rare, moving between castes is possible. In some ways, githyanki society is a meritocracy, where competition is fierce and deadly. Since blood ties do not matter, a githyanki's birth has no impact on her station in life. Aptitudes and skills demonstrated in youth determine caste and initial rank. As a githyanki rises through the ranks of her caste or a position in another caste, all other githyanki are expected to treat her accordingly.

THE LICH-QUEEN'S PLANS

The majority of the *githzerai* in the Astral Sea are loyal to Vlaakith CLVII the lich-queen, current ruler of Tu'narath. A distant descendant of the original Vlaakith charged by Gith with continuing the githyanki tradition of conquest, Vlaakith has reigned longer than any other githyanki (including Gith) since transforming into a lich long ago. The githyanki admire the current Vlaakith's clever evasion of her soul's eventual transference to Tiamat, though some wonder if meddling with the conditions of the pact with Tiamat is a good idea.

Those doubters would be far more worried if they knew that Vlaakith has spent much of her life seeking a way to become a deity. Her recent attempts utilize the latent power of the dead god that empowers Tu'narath, though it seems unlikely that the combination of a dead god and a githyanki lich would somehow yield a living god. If Vlaakith finds a way to complete her apotheosis, githyanki society would be thrown into disarray. Obedience to superiors goes only so far, and if Vlaakith becomes a god, the highest rank of slaver, many githyanki would align themselves against her for being an enemy of Gith, instead of following her as loyal subordinates. Another civil war seems inevitable if Vlaakith succeeds, and likely even if she fails and her plan becomes known.

Since no one aside from Vlaakith understands her plans for ascension, the majority of the githyanki are loyal to her as their rightful commander. Ambitious githyanki who rise through the ranks of their society must be careful not to look like contenders for Vlaakith's power, since many potential rivals have been eliminated for threatening to disrupt the rightful order.

FACTIONS

There are two main factions within the githyanki race: the far travelers and the gul'othran.

THE FAR TRAVELERS

At least one group of githyanki holds itself apart from Tu'narath and Vlaakith. This splinter faction, known as the far travelers, consists of true nomads that avoid Tu'narath and its hierarchies of rank. The far travelers are the descendants of githyanki that opposed the first great stratagem. When Tu'narath was first settled, a few githyanki were unwilling to give up their life of perfect mobility and freedom. With the blessing of Gith, these githyanki loaded themselves onto dozens of ships and set forth to wander the Astral Sea.

Over time, the far travelers have lost many of their original ships and replaced them with others stolen

from civilizations throughout the Astral Sea. Though they have the same military traditions as the main branch of the githyanki, the far travelers take the githyanki's aversion to being tied to specific terrain to an extreme. They never occupy the sites they plunder, not even briefly. They also fail to share in the fruits of the central culture's great stratagems: They lack Tu'narath's cartomancy, any benefit from the pact with Tiamat, and the silver swords that warn of Far Realm incursions. Instead, the far travelers either sail into the deepest reaches of the Astral Sea where no one else bothers to travel, or they roam from one place to the next, slaying and plundering.

The far travelers are not without a sense of loyalty to the other githyanki. Once a year they load a single astral vessel with a tribute of treasure, raw materials, magic items, and other goods. The tribute is then sailed to Tu'narath, where it is presented to Vlaakith to honor her and support Tu'narath. If the tribute constitutes a bribe, it has so far proven effective.

THE GUL'OTHRAN

When Gith first led the githyanki out of slavery and into the conquest of the Astral Sea, she swore ultimate vengeance upon the mind flayers and their kin. Among the githyanki, no group takes this quest for revenge more seriously than the gul'othran. While the majority of the githyanki raid, plunder, and pillage throughout the Astral Sea, the gul'othran have tasked themselves with fighting a never-ending war against the spawn of the Far Realm.

It is the gul'othran that launch attacks on mind flayers and their ilk outside the Astral Plane, and it is the gul'othran that strike first at any threats to the githyanki. Some of the githyanki encountered in the world are gul'othran working to undermine the illithids and their thralls.

Of course, the gul'othran put a distinctively githyanki twist on the project of opposing the illithids. The gul'othran outlook is simple: By invading other worlds, the githyanki can ensure that those places do not become bastions of safety for mind flayers and their kind. The gul'othran seek to invade other worlds and set themselves up as rulers, using conquest to ensure that their ancient enemies have no place to go. When the gul'othran invade, it is not to plunder and then leave; it is permanent.

Fortunately for the world of mortals, the gul'othran are presently almost entirely preoccupied with the roving aberrant entity called Xurathon, a twisted stronghold of the mind flayers that eludes most of the githyanki's detection magic. The gul'othran might not be strong enough to destroy Xurathon. If that proves true, the characters might be required to solve the problem instead—a single case in which an alliance with the githyanki is a good idea for someone other than Tiamat.

SCALES OF WAR

The *Scales of War* adventure path, presented in *Dungeon* magazine as a part of *D&D Insider*, takes an alternate view of githyanki history. In the *Scales of War* adventures, Vlaakith was slain in the recent past by rebels and (reportedly) a band of adventurers from outside the Astral Plane. Part of the story arc in these adventures deals with the return of Gith and the breaking of the pact with Tiamat. Though the adventure path uses these assumptions, they are but one way that events could progress. If you design a campaign of your own featuring the githyanki, remember that the *Scales of War* path presents just one interpretation of the future of the githyanki. You are free to use or discard that version as you see fit.

The great githzerai sage Liricosa sat serenely upon a smooth pillow of rock floating several feet above the floor. Below him, a circle of acolytes gazed upward patiently.

"It is true," he replied slowly, never quite looking at the student who had asked, "that the maruts, with their statuelike forms, might easily be mistaken for creatures of the Elemental Chaos. They are, however, neither elemental nor chaotic in any sense of those terms.

"Legends tell of an eon of ages ago, before even the Dawn War, when the gods had only begun to show their interest in the world between, which was the plaything and playground of the primordials. The gods had not yet learned to work together—had not yet been forced to work together by the primordial threat. Yet some, such as Erathis and Corellon, and even Zehir, sought means of preventing true conflict among divinities. For even casual disagreements—over territory, over how to shape a mortal race, or even over simple insults—could wreak widespread destruction.

"Yet the deities could not agree on how to arbitrate these disputes. Few were willing to trust any other god in such cases, for fear that the 'judge' might be in league with the opposing party. Neither were mortals, nor even angels, acceptable mediators, for as Ioun is supposed to have said, 'All who live have needs and urges, and thus must all who live prove biased, no matter how they struggle for neutrality. How can we, as gods, subjugate ourselves to imperfect judgment?'

"This, then, was the dilemma of the gods—that no living being could provide the impartiality the gods themselves demanded. Even the oldest legends cannot agree on who proposed the solution, but it was Amoth and Moradin who made that solution reality. If the living were unsuitable for mediating divine disputes, then they would create mediators who were not living at all.

"Moradin forged great bodies, not from metal or stone—though it resembled such substances—but from the stuff of the Astral Sea. From the spiritual energy of the Plane Above, Amoth took the soulstuff of unborn angels. He imprisoned those spirits with the aid of Torog—who even then showed talent for trapping, though he was not yet the god of the Underdark. Then, Amoth and Tuern channeled the spirits into these waiting bodies. Together, the gods breathed animation into their creation, and thus rose the first marut—a creature unborn, burning with the spirit of an angel yet lacking the slightest urge, need, or bias of the living. The gods brought their disputes to this creature, and whether or not they agreed with its decrees, they knew those judgments, at least, to be truly impartial."

The sage bowed his head ever so slightly, the only signal that his recitation was complete. For a moment there was silence in the chamber, and then one of his students voiced a question.

"Oh, master," she asked, "you said these were legends of which you spoke. Are they true?"

"The maruts believe them," Liricosa answered. "Therefore, they are true."

LIFE AND CULTURE

For the most part, maruts dwell only in populations of other maruts. Throughout the Astral Sea—and, far more rarely, in the mortal realm—stand great, blocky fortresses of stone and metal (or of astral matter that resembles stone and metal). Some of these fortresses are mundane in design, while others consist of moving wings and mobile towers, driven by clanking gears the size of taverns and chains as thick as trees. Within each fortress, one or more cadres of maruts dwell. Because they require no sustenance and scant rest, maruts spend little time on those activities that dominate the lives of the residents of other communities. Instead, they occupy themselves with martial exercise, in philosophical and hypothetical debates, and in determining where their attentions are next required. These fortresses are more than defensive bastions; they are storehouses of the contracts that maruts have signed with others or otherwise been tasked with enforcing.

THE WRITTEN WORD

Legend suggests that, in their earliest years, the deities had no written form of Supernal. Only as time passed did they realize the need for a form of "permanent words." The name of the god or gods who first set out to create a written language is forgotten today—many assume it was Ioun, but her own priests deny this, claiming that she learned from another.

In any event, it was not the deities alone who proved responsible. According to the maruts, they assisted in the development of the Supernal script and, far more important, it was they who disseminated it across the Astral Sea, educating angels and even gods in its use.

As to what was on those tablets scribed with Supernal? Priests of Vecna and the Raven Queen both believe that writing to be the secrets of the ultimate fate of souls beyond the known cosmos, while Ioun's followers suggest that it's something even greater: the eventual fate of the cosmos. Nobody can say for certain, however, for these tablets were lost during the Dawn War. Not the slightest hint of their whereabouts—or even their survival—has arisen since.

Mortals think of maruts as heavenly mercenaries. Some cultures—those that know nothing else about them, not even their true names—call maruts “inevitables,” due to their relentless nature. This belief, however, is only partially accurate. Even though maruts indeed hire themselves out as guards, police, and enforcers, they do so only to further causes that are in line with their own legalistic and bureaucratic tendencies. Some accept any employer, while other maruts serve only great powers such as gods, devils, and exarchs.

Maruts rarely take coin for their services. Sometimes they accept—or demand—magic items or political favors. Frequently they seek an exchange of services, and sometimes the service they are owed does not come due for years. In a significant minority of marut fortresses, natural humanoids make up a substantial portion of the population. These are not slaves per se, but rather individuals who have sold themselves into indentured servitude as payment for a marut’s service. Although these servants are never deliberately mistreated, working for maruts is unpleasant, because these astral warriors are strict and unforgiving taskmasters.

On rare occasion, a marut (or a cadre of maruts) might take over as governors of a mortal society. Usually this occurs if the maruts are serving as agents of some other employer, but occasionally an entire community finds itself indebted to the maruts, who view this situation as an opportunity to reshape a significant population into a more lawful and orderly form. As with the servants in marut fortresses, the citizens of such areas swiftly realize that their lives will be short and harsh if they don’t blindly adhere to every rule. However, if they have a legitimate grievance, it is also dealt with swiftly.

OUTLOOK AND INTERACTION

To this day, maruts still hold to the purpose given them by the gods. Maruts are, in essence, warrior bureaucrats. For the right price—or sometimes no price at all—they serve not only as mediators, but also as enforcers. To almost all maruts, the fairness or reasonability of a contract or an agreement matters little; only the agreement itself is sacrosanct. Maruts see creation as being full of imperfect creatures that cannot be trusted to obey the dictates of law and order. Although a few cadres have other priorities, most maruts prefer mercenary service that allows them to punish lawbreakers and those who violate contracts.

The deities aren’t exempt from these requirements, either. Though the gods were ostensibly the maruts’ creators, maruts hold no more loyalty to the gods than they do to anyone else, because harboring such an allegiance would lead to bias, and the maruts cannot abide that state of affairs.



The maruts, however, aren’t all of a single mind. They are not machines, though they resemble machines, and they have differences of opinion. Maruts divide themselves into cadres of like-minded individuals, and conflicts between cadres are rare but not unheard of. One cadre might take trickery or coercion into account when determining if someone has violated a contract, while others consider only the precise letter of an agreement. Also, some cadres view the cosmos through different outlooks. For instance, some maruts believe that the violation of natural laws (such as undeath) is of far greater significance than the violation of mortal laws. A cadre of maruts who hold that viewpoint serves the Raven Queen, enforcing the sanctity of death.

Fundamentally, no matter how an individual or a cadre might express this stance, maruts are beings of inflexible order and uncompromising law. Their motivation for accepting mercenary service is based on spreading their vision of law across the cosmos under the aegis of legitimate authority (their employers)—not because they choose to do so, but because they must. The lawless nature of reality, and their own internal drives, requires nothing less.

It is unclear why maruts prefer favors in payment for their services or what their ultimate objectives might be. One current theory, put forth by Ioun’s priests and popular among planar sages, is that the maruts hope—though they know it will take eons—to eventually hold the entire cosmos, or at least the



greater powers thereof, in their debt. When that time comes, the maruts will no longer need to serve others; they can call in all their favors at once, governing and even reshaping reality into a far more orderly form.

MAJOR SITES

Dozens, if not more, marut fortresses are sprinkled throughout the Astral Sea and the mortal realm. Although they vary in size and shape, each fortress is similar to the next. Some others might hold greater import to the maruts, but the following sites have gained infamy among mortals.

THE TOWER OF JUDGMENT

Although the Tower of Judgment is not the largest marut bastion, its gears and moving sections make it one of the most complex. Built among the Daybreak Islands, the island chain beyond Hes-tavar, the Tower of Judgment is believed to be the oldest marut bastion. According to legends, the first marut—supposedly created by Moradin and Amoth and boasting nearly the power of a god—still oversees his own cadre from within the heights of the Tower of Judgment. Whether this claim is true or not, entities that have minor disagreements with one another that aren't worth warring over still seek the arbitration of the maruts that dwell here.

THE BASTION OF INEVITABILITY

Although the known portions of the Astral Sea are finite and bounded, the Plane Above is infinite in extent. Even the most far-traveling githyanki, and the deities themselves, do not know what lies beyond the space that has been charted. The maruts don't either—but they intend to be present if anyone finds out so that they can establish themselves and defend against the chaos that lies beyond the known realms.

Reckoning the Tower of Judgment to be the “center” of the known Astral Sea, the maruts continuously move the Bastion of Inevitability farther out as explorers of all creeds discover more distant reaches of the plane. The Bastion does not travel the Plane Above like a vessel, but rather it simply appears in a new place after vacating its previous location. Within a matter of days after someone has established a new “farthest known point” from the Tower of Judgment, no matter the direction, the Bastion of Inevitability appears nearby, staying until a yet more distant destination is discovered.

The magic of the Bastion is not infallible, however. Sufficiently potent magic can mask a distant explorer from the maruts' detection, allowing that explorer to survey some portion of the deep Astral Sea without the Bastion following.

MARUTS IN OTHER REALMS

Although most maruts reside in the Astral Sea, their contracts and investigations spread them throughout the cosmos. Unlike full-time agents of the gods of law and good, the maruts often operate as inscrutable observers until their survival or obscure interests are threatened.

For instance, a group composed primarily of maruts calling itself the Watchers of Tomorrow monitors the Pandemonium Stone in the Elemental Chaos (*The Plane Below*, page 80). The Watchers seldom drive off the slaads and chaos creatures that are also drawn to the Stone. Instead they hold themselves ready, waiting for the Pandemonium Stone to “hatch” into a god-thing they plan to serve or to slay.

Rocketing across the Astral Sea on comet-ships constructed from the glowing remnants of their shattered realm, the implacable but fanatic quom strike fear into the hearts of adventurers and evil-doers alike.

HISTORY OF THE QUOM

These mortal inhabitants of the Astral Sea trace their history to the time before the Dawn War. At that time, the quom were the healers, mediators, and scholars of the Astral Sea. Their occultists discovered many of the arcane formulas that underpin magical powers still used today. They dedicated themselves to the service of others and recognized all peoples as one. When they performed great deeds of benefit to all, their deity, Lakal, rewarded them with ecstatic moments of personal communion. Unlike other early deities, Lakal was not worshiped as an individual god. She was the home realm of the quom and could be perceived only in those fleeting instants of spiritual connection. But in another sense, to dwellers in that realm, she was around them every moment of their lives as part of their ordinary physical surroundings.

THE DOOM OF LAKAL

The first inkling of the doom that befell the quom occurred when their mediators were unable to avert the Dawn War. Final destruction occurred when Bahamut pursued Nihil, a primordial incarnation of nothingness, across the Astral Sea for a final reckoning. Their titanic battle started elsewhere but ended in Lakal, as both deities crashed through Lakal's silvery-green veil. Bahamut blasted Nihil with his holy breath, destroying Nihil, shattering its body, and causing shards of its deceased nonbeing to permeate the body of Lakal.

On that day, Lakal died and the realm exploded into a thousand comets and countless smaller particles. Everyone present in the realm died instantly. The only quom left were the thousands that had spread out through the Astral Sea and other worlds to tend the wounded in the Dawn War.

THE VOW OF THE QUOM

As Lakal's dying shrieks reverberated in their heads, the surviving quom chose, as one, to set aside the ways of peace. From that day forward, they vowed to heal only their own. With unyielding determination, they sought to revive Lakal by tracking down and reassembling her sundered parts, slaying anyone who stood in their path without mercy or moral purpose, just as their families and their deity had been slain. If those victims were innocent bystanders in a greater

struggle, so be it. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time, just as Lakal had been.

THE UNSUNDERING

The quom call their project to reassemble all the parts of Lakal "the unsundering." They work ceaselessly to gather up every fragment of Lakal, no matter how small. The largest parts were long ago discovered. Now, the quom comet-hunters, as they are called, track down tiny shards. When a hunter is within 15 feet of one, he or she is capable of perceiving a speck of Lakal as tiny as a pinpoint.

The unsundering puts the quom in conflict with all other inhabitants of the Astral Sea. Many of the tiny motes of Lakal that the quom now hunt have long since integrated themselves with other objects. They are often found in magic items that have been scattered throughout the known realms over the years. It is entirely possible that a magic ring purchased in Sigil or found in a mortal-world dungeon contains a long-lost speck of Lakal matter.

Lakal-matter also functions as a nutrient, and as such it can be found in edible plants and the bodies of living animals. Many creatures have infinitesimal bits of Lakal embedded in their bodies. Although a small incision might be sufficient to remove a mote of Lakal matter lodged in the skin or a surface muscle, a spot in one's lungs or heart requires an extraction that proves fatal to the patient. The quom perform these murderous surgeries without qualm or hesitation.

One or more characters, or their equipment, might be targeted by the quom. The quom have enough experience with adventurers to realize that few such individuals allow one member of their band to be singled out and destroyed, so an adventuring party that has one member targeted by the quom is likely to be attacked en masse.

Even if they aren't being targeted at a given time, characters need to be on their guard around the quom. One peaceful encounter with a quom does not guarantee that a future encounter will not lead to violence, since in the intervening time one or more characters might unknowingly ingest motes of Lakal.

Fragments of Lakal large enough to be seen look like softly glowing crystals. When quom comet-hunters find new motes, they press them against the hull of their comet-ship, growing each ship one tiny piece at a time. On the day when all the pieces are gathered, the ships will be set on a collision course with one another, and Lakal, the realm and the deity, will be reborn.

Some say that before Lakal can be fully reconstructed, Bahamut will have to die, to atone for his unthinking role in her doom. Until they are close to

having recovered all of her, the quom see no reason to actively pursue this goal. They do, however, treat Bahamut's worshipers and clerics with special contempt, finding excuses to pursue and slay them even when they are presently free of any remnants of Lakal.

LIFE AND CULTURE

Quom are nearly hairless humanoid beings. Broad-shouldered, burly, and heavily muscled, they combine the body proportions of dwarves with the average height of humankind. Skin colors range across the cool end of the spectrum, from light green to deep violet. A light turquoise shade is common, marking individuals as descendants of the long-defunct diplomat caste. Blood relatives display similar skin tones.

From scalp to tiptoe, every quom is perfectly symmetrical. Skin blemishes are unknown among the race. The quom celebrate this strange perfection and take special care to avoid scarring. When a quom is permanently marked by an injury, it slashes itself to create an identical scar on the opposite side of its body. Quom that lose extremities go into hiding until they can be healed with ritual magic. A quom that shows itself while in an asymmetrical condition violates the gravest of taboos.

A quom of great achievement undergoes a bizarre physical transformation. Over a period of weeks, the back of its skull begins to reconfigure itself. A brow ridge appears, then eye sockets, and finally, a set of functioning eyes. Eventually, the quom gains an entire second face on the back of its head, identical to the first. (In game terms, this change occurs when a quom advances to the epic tier.) From this point on, the quom is capable of sensing the presence of one of Lakal's motes within 40 feet of itself, compared to 15 feet for an ordinary quom comet-hunter.

Quom that have second faces are known as durud. This word means leader, hero, wise one, and priest, all at once. When a quom becomes old and infirm, its second face fades and is reabsorbed. It loses its durud status and enters a state of feeble-minded dotage. This change rarely occurs, since most durud die in combat or in self-sacrifice (see below) long before old age can creep up on them.

Males and females regard one another as equals, although durud are more important than anyone else. Quom society is a meritocracy, and family status means nothing. Only an individual's accomplishments have meaning in quom society, and only to the degree that those actions support the gathering of motes. Those that can no longer contribute for whatever reason feed themselves to their ships. This grim ritual, poorly understood by outsiders, sustains the comet material so that it does not burn out. Other prisoners are sometimes fed to the ships as well, even

though they do not produce the same benefit as a self-sacrificing quom.

Various renegades, agents of deities, and devils have made temporary bargains with specific quom, but such arrangements never take precedence over the hunt for fragments of Lakal. As soon as one of the parties to a bargain acquires or ingests a mote of Lakal, the agreement comes to a bloody end. Even githyanki can be bargained with, bought off, or paid ransom. Quom don't care about anyone else unless that creature is a target that needs harvesting.

OUTLOOK AND INTERACTION

The unpredictable flows and accumulations of Lakal determine where the quom are likely to strike. When they have no solid leads on large fragments, quom vessels fall back on a few hunting patterns that have historically yielded consistent results: looking for new outsiders, preying on travelers coming out of Hestavar and the Daybreak Islands, and rummaging through the unexplored shards of the deep Astral Sea.

The quom have discovered that a disproportionate number of outsiders have soulforms that contain substantial amounts of Lakal. As a result, quom ships frequently sail around the shores of the border islands, looking for outsiders that have been missed on earlier passes, newly arrived outsiders, or better yet, swimmers trying to reach the nearest divine dominion. Against weak targets that cannot properly defend themselves, the quom frequently use surgical precision, slaying only their targets and anyone who gets in their way.

Hestavar is a never-slowing font of magic industry, thanks to the Game of Making. Quom ships that have nowhere better to go often dock in the Daybreak Islands and send out search parties, hoping for a lucky strike such as a paragon or epic tier adventuring party carrying a trove of potential Lakal-bearing magic items, though the movements of such groups are hard to predict.

The search for Lakal more or less requires the quom to systematically work through the entire Astral Sea. Characters exploring long-forgotten stretches of the Astral Sea might eventually realize that the question is not if they will encounter the quom, but when.

SHIPS AND SHIPBOARD LIFE

Each quom ship houses an entire community. The ship's captain, always a durud, acts as leader. Captains are judged not by their fairness or by the prosperity of their people, but by the quantity and quality of the motes the ship collects. A captain might be deposed at any time by a majority vote of a ship's durud. To choose anyone other than a durud as captain is unthinkable.



Combatants and crew members comprise a minority of each ship's population. Comet-ships are floating villages, supporting crafters, traders, children, and the elderly. The quom grow herbs and raise small animals on deck, but they earn most of their food through trade, salvage, and the occasional bout of opportunistic piracy. As feared as the quom are, their delicate metalwork and ceramic containers are coveted throughout the Astral Sea.

Each ship is named after an aspect of Lakal, but cultural differences between ships are minimal. For example, the *Pasusap* is named for Lakal in her capacity as a grain goddess. Although crew members wear a wheat-sheaf emblem, they are no more agriculturally inclined than the people of any other quom vessel.

The divine essence of slain Lakal, visible as a flaring cometlike tail, propels quom ships through the Astral Sea. In ship-to-ship fights, quom captains try

to maneuver enemy vessels into these searing energy trails. They obscure line of sight and deal fire damage to opposing ships and crews alike.

RIVALRIES

No central authority binds the dozens of quom crews zipping through the Astral Sea. Captains coordinate efforts only by ad hoc agreement.

The quom are believed to act as a single force that is focused only on the remaking of Lakal. In reality, the various communities can't help but compete with one another. A quom prophecy tells of the Restorer, the messianic future hero who will find the last missing piece of Lakal. This individual will become truly immortal as the eternal guardian-monarch of Lakal Restored. On that day, the quom will take new individual names, and a name for their people, all palindromes.

Every generation of quom believes that it will live to see the restoration, thinking that surely only a last few motes remain to be found. That their ancestors believed the same thing scarcely troubles them. To believe otherwise is to exhibit pessimism, which undermines morale.

Each captain thinks it has a chance of becoming the Restorer—as long as none of its peers jumps in ahead of it. The quom don't openly fight one another. However, the sneakier ones have been known to covertly hire adventurers to sidetrack, slow, and frustrate rivals. This is most likely to happen when two ships discover a large mote at the same time and rush to be the first to claim it.

ENEMIES OF THE GODS

Beyond their special enmity for Bahamut, the quom believe that all gods and primordials share responsibility for the death of Lakal. They say that the divide between law and chaos and good and evil is merely a story each side tells about itself. Morality died when Lakal was slain. When she is restored, perhaps a new accord can be struck with those deities willing to bow down before her and make gestures of contrition. In the meantime, the gods and their followers deserve nothing but scorn. Clerics, invokers, and paladins are treated as dupes and charlatans.

Although their goddess is dead, the quom can still wield divine power, which they derive from the energy surrounding their ships.

SHATTERED DOMINIONS

Although deities might die, their dominions endure. Each of the dominions described in this section, with the exception of Carceri, either lost its deity or was lost by its deity. These shattered dominions are easier to find than the smaller astral motes. Although the shattered dominions drift on the tides of the Astral Sea like other motes, all but Erishani have functioning color veils that extend into the Astral Sea, remnants of magic from eons past when these places were visited on purpose.

CARCERI

Hidden in the farthest reaches of the Astral Sea, a deep crimson color veil blinks like a bloodshot eye. The hue is subtly wrong, grating on mortal minds. Most turn away at this point, driven by an instinct they cannot identify but dare not deny. As instincts go, it's a wise one. Going forward into Carceri could be a fatal mistake.

No matter what direction travelers come from, or what means of travel they use, those who penetrate Carceri's veil find themselves beached on a shallow swamp and staring at enormous gates of adamantite set in a seemingly endless wall. No other means of entering or leaving the dominion exists, except for the occasional treacherous portal. These are the gates to Carceri, the prison of the gods.

Carceri is an archipelago of six marshy isles, ranging from miles to leagues across and strewn beneath a starless sky. Prisoners of the deities languish here, including disobedient angels, demons, primordial servants, exalted of rival deities, abominations, and horrors from beyond the known planes. Most of the gods use Carceri to one extent or another. Evils that Pelor or Bahamut could not destroy (or that they seek to study) can be found here, as can Bane's prisoners of war, deathless beings the Raven Queen would not allow to roam free, and even vile souls and devils that have drawn Asmodeus's ire but have no place among the damned. One of the few laws that even the most evil and chaotic deities have little choice but to obey is the Carceri Compact: No deity shall interfere with the prisoners of any other. Ironically, that law is harder on good deities, and on Bahamut in particular, who disagrees with what the evil deities consider justice, than on evil gods, but the Carceri Compact binds all but the four free gods (see the sidebar).

However, there is another reason for Carceri's existence: Not even the deities can always control what they create.

On the isle known as Agathys, several deities assembled early during the Dawn War. Melora and

Moradin shaped bodies both organic and mechanical; Ioun and Amoth twisted the stuff of the Astral Sea, so spirits that would have become angels entered those bodies instead; and Tuern and Gruumsh bestowed upon them the unending need to kill. Thus were born the first abominations—living weapons carved from the divine order.

Twisted Agathys birthed one abomination after another. Occasionally, the deities would return to shape the flowing energy and create new and more potent weapons, but for much of the war, they were content to let the process—the new “natural order” of this one astral dominion—run its course.

It wasn't until the war ended that the deities discovered they couldn't change it back. The astral pocket had been twisted too long by energy that had become too powerful to be stopped up. The gods could slow the hideous twisting, which they did, but still more abominations were “born” into the Astral Sea. Bizarrely, the end of the Dawn War seemed to change the rules by which Agathys operated: Abominations that had previously been created by the primordials to slay the deities now spewed from Agathys alongside the deities' original creations.

The deities set about ensuring that these horrors could not escape. Moradin forged the adamantite wall that surrounds Carceri; the other deities joined to weave the divine enchantments that prevent escape. From his lair in the Underdark, even Torog contributed to the magic that turned the pocket into the Red Prison. By confining their most potent enemies inside Carceri, the deities not only removed threats to themselves, but also stemmed the tide of the abominations—for the prisoners within can hope to survive only by banding together to battle those abominations and killing at least a few at a time.

This, then, is the truth behind Carceri—that it is a prison, but that those condemned to rot there do so,

THE DISSENTING VOICE: THE FOUR FREE GODS

The deities who joined together to establish Carceri as an eternal prison “signed” what some exalted of the Plane Above refer to as the Carceri Compact. However, there were dissenters. Avandra, Corellon, Melora, and Sehanine acknowledged that they had contributed to the plague of abominations along with the rest of their peers. Nevertheless, they would not help establish an eternal prison. Instead, as outlined in the Arvandor section in Chapter 2, Corellon and Sehanine sacrificed a portion of their realm by opening it to the violent birth and loathsome rampages of the abominations, an act that has been incorporated into Arvandor's lifestyle as the Glorious Hunt.

at least in part, to mitigate the repercussions of one of the deities' earliest mistakes.

THE ISLES OF CARCERI

The Red Prison consists of six separate marshy isles. They occasionally shift position, as though they are merely floating on the bottomless swampy waters, rather than anchored. No matter how they shift, the isle of Agathys is always farthest from the adamantine gates.

The sky above Carceri is the dull blue-gray of dusk, without a single star. What light exists shines up from below, filtering through the marshy waters without any obvious source. This illumination is dim at best, with a crimson tint that gives the swamp-waters the look of diluted blood.

Although the general climate of the Red Prison is constant, the islands are substantially different from one another—not merely in environment, but in inhabitation. Carceri serves as a prison for thousands of entities, with the stronger dominating the weaker and even forming personal fiefdoms. Even though there's no formal assignment of specific kinds of creatures to specific isles, prisoners frequently congregate with others of similar ilk. Thus, although any sort of prisoner can be found on any of the islands other than Agathys, each isle tends to hold more of certain creatures.

As a side effect of the strong magic that inhibits the creation of new abominations, no one on Carceri can create new life, breed, or bear offspring. Carceri will never be a full society, since it renews only by having prisoners added as other prisoners die off.

More often than not, the six isles appear in the order given below, from nearest the gate to farthest away. Each entry mentions one or more of the isle's infamous features, though other sites exist.

ORTHRYS

The bogs of Orthrys tend to be shallow and cold but not nearly as frigid as the other isles. Channels, dug by riverlike currents that run through the marsh, cut into the murky earth beneath the swamps. Swarms of biting, stinging insects infest the isle, and the plants that grow on the rare patches of dry earth tend to be irritating, if not downright poisonous, to visitors.

The Bastion of Lost Hope: This great fortress accounts for the entire quantity of stone to be found on Orthrys. Close examination reveals that it is constructed from the corpses and bones of stone-related elementals and giants and mortared with dried blood and crushed plant life. The Bastion is ruled by King Karsos, a stone titan of nearly deific power. From here, he and a corps of other titans dominate Orthrys, ruling over the various giant and elemental creatures that make up the bulk of the populace.

CATHRYS

Cathrys features a vast array of cypress trees, peculiar fronds, and clinging vines; were it not for the ever-present marsh, the isle might seem more jungle than swamp. Some of these growths appear in sporadic copses, while others are thick enough that the canopy blots out the sky.

Despite the chill in the air, the humidity causes newcomers to sweat in misery—not due to heat, but because of a caustic, venomous miasma. The plant life is equally acidic, burning exposed flesh.

The Apothecary of Sin: Constructed of a cunning array of woven wood strips and rope-suspended walkways atop a copse of trees, the Apothecary is home to one of Carceri's strangest prisoners. Called Sinmaker, the creature is an aspect of Graz'zt (*Manual of the*



Planes, page 131). Sinmaker was summoned to battle an exarch of Pelor who managed, using divine magic, to prevent the aspect from disincorporating when the battle ended. He remains imprisoned here while the deities try to determine how best to make use of him.

Sinmaker has remained uninvolved in the struggles for power throughout Carceri. He dwells in his Apothecary, studying the poisons and acidic plants of the isle, brewing horrid concoctions, and selling or trading them to all comers.

The Palace of Branches: Formed from woven branches, trunks, and roots, this small fortress is in one of the isle's thickest copses of trees. Uru Thalz, one of several unique angels vying for dominance over Cathrys, rules here over a band of devils and rebellious angels.

MINETHYS

This isle consists largely of a deep layer of clinging mud, which pulls at all who pass over it. Entire hills and even cliffs rise and fall, occasionally collapsing into mudslides that fill the swampy basins.

Great winds rage sporadically across Minethys, pulling clumps of mud into the air. On occasion, these clumps dry out as they are flung around, transforming into gritty missiles of dirt that can flay the skin from those unfortunate enough to be caught in their path.

The Tombs of Payratheon: A small city once stood upon the isle of Minethys, hurled there by one of the gods when the populace somehow enraged that deity. Today the city is long buried beneath dozens of feet of clinging mud, but on occasion, the winds and shifting mudslides reveal portions of Payratheon for several hours before the place is once again entombed. The city is home to numerous undead—some recent prisoners, others the city's original inhabitants—that occasionally struggle their way to the surface to prey upon passersby.

COLOTHYS

Like Minethys, Colothys contains substantial rises, hills, valleys, and even the occasional small mountain, but the terrain here is more traditional swampland and bog. In many reaches of Colothys,

DIVINE JAILORS

Not all of Carceri's inhabitants are prisoners. The deities placed a substantial number of guards throughout the dominion (and even put a few "undercover," posing as prisoners). These guards come from a variety of races, just like the prisoners, but the most common are angels, maruts, and devils (Asmodeus has a stake in Carceri too, after all). As an unintended side effect of the jailors' mission, they frequently turn toward the worship of Torog, not as a matter of choice but as a consequence of the changes wrought upon them by their work.

the plants—from fronds to branches and vines to flowers—are animate and predatory, grabbing and devouring those who draw near. Some have theorized that these plants represent a single enormous organism that spreads across the bulk of the isle.

The Garden of Malice: The central wood of the isle's deadly foliage resembles a corrupted Feywild grove. The Court of Blood—one of several factions of fey and mortal souls that vie for control of Colothys—frequently gathers within.

PORPHATYS

One of the coldest isles, Porphatys is dominated by swamps that are fed by thick flurries of black, caustic snow. Although Porphatys closely resembles the swampy reaches of the other islands, a few large portions amid the shallower bogs are so deep that they are practically lakes, or even tiny inland seas.

The acidic snowfall invariably wears down immobile structures. Thus, many of the isle's prisoners dwell on large rafts and barges, slowly poling their way through the marshy reaches and taking shelter against the most severe of the snowfalls.

The Deep Flotilla: A gathering of a dozen long barges and rafts sails on Porphatys's lakes and deepest swamps. Although the flotilla appears to be made of individual vessels, each craft is linked below the waterline by a network of mostly watertight passageways. One of the many demonic packs that ravage the isle occupies the flotilla. The leader of this pack is Rienkov, a shadow demon (*Manual of the Planes*, page 122). How a being of Rienkov's (presumed) modest power has managed to dominate a pack of more formidable demons is a mystery.

AGATHYS

Far beyond the other isles lies Agathys, which is the reason for the Red Prison's existence. Vast arrays of the dominion's guards stand here, preventing anyone from approaching. The isle stands high above the others, atop a rocky shore. Its lands are presumably as cold and swampy as those of the other isles, but none can say for certain.

It is here that the stuff of the Astral Sea is warped and twisted, slowly but steadily giving birth to more abominations. Some remain imprisoned on the isle, others die in battle with Agathys's guards, and still more spread out into Carceri, where they compete with the other prisoners. No matter what becomes of its output, the flow of abominations never stops.

ADVENTURES

The Red Prison is the perfect location for "prison-break" tales writ large. Epic tier characters might seek to break out one of Carceri's prisoners, whether it's an ally, someone they've been hired to free, or someone that has knowledge they require.

Alternatively, one or more of the characters might be sentenced to Carceri. By the time they reach the epic tier, the characters might have irritated one or more deities, and since no other deity will help them escape, they must find a means of doing so themselves—preferably without freeing the other prisoners, who deserve to be there, in the process.

However, Carceri isn't limited to prison-oriented plotlines. The characters might hope to discover some of the dominion's secrets, such as by exploring the hidden reaches of Payratheon or even studying the nature of the abominations' "cradle" on Agathys.

Regardless of what plots you design, one of Carceri's greatest advantages is that it can be home to literally any powerful villains or monsters that you choose.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Carceri's islands have similar environments, reflected in the fact that the terrain limitations described below are constant and universal. You can ensure that each isle also has a slightly different flavor by selectively using the fantastic terrain and natural terrain features.

TERRAIN LIMITATIONS

Certain terrain limitations exist within the dominion of Carceri, no matter the location.

Flight: Divine magic prevents creatures within Carceri—except for guards posted by the deities—from flying higher than 6 squares.

Portals: Several portals throughout the cosmos send creatures to Carceri, but none are known that provide an exit.

Scrying: Creatures within Carceri can be observed by magic used outside the dominion, though only divine power can see into Agathys. Scrying magic used within the dominion, whether to see something inside Carceri or outside it, automatically fails.

Teleportation: Teleportation effects are limited to the isle on which they originate. Thus, creatures within Carceri can teleport to other locations on the isle they occupy, but not to other isles or beyond the dominion.

FANTASTIC TERRAIN

These terrain features can be added to encounters in Carceri to make them more challenging.

Grasping Vines: Vines, roots, and other vegetation that has become infused with aberrant energies emanating from Agathys can entangle those that come near.

Effect: When a creature starts its turn in or adjacent to a square of grasping vines, it must make a saving throw. If the creature saves, it's slowed until the start of its next turn; otherwise, it's restrained until the start of its next turn.

Usage: Creatures familiar with the local landscape might use grasping vines as part of a trap for unwary

visitors, focusing their attention subsequently on the ones who remain unrestrained.

Insect Swarm: Swarms of biting, sucking insects are found throughout the area, looking for their next source of food. Fresh blood often draws them.

Effect: When a living creature starts its turn within an insect swarm, it takes 5 damage per tier and grants combat advantage until the start of its next turn. Creatures immune to this damage (considered melee damage) do not grant combat advantage.

Usage: An insect swarm can serve either as a form of controller in combat (used purposely by the characters' enemies), or as an unpredictable element in an encounter that changes all the combatants' tactics. Introduce one or more swarms a few rounds after the start of a fight and have them move to the nearest creature each round.

NATURAL TERRAIN

These terrain features can be found on any of Carceri's islands.

Cold: Carceri ranges from cold to frigid cold (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 159); a few regions even cross over into primordial cold or frigid primordial cold (*The Plane Below*, page 12).

Mud: Shallow mud is difficult terrain. Moving through deep mud requires a hard DC Athletics check to "swim." Deep mud is considered difficult terrain for swimmers, and the DC for Endurance checks for submerged creatures to avoid drowning increases by 4. A creature that leaves the mud is slowed by the clinging sludge (save ends).

In addition, a creature caught in a mudslide is pushed 2d8 squares and submerged as though in deep mud.

Precipitation, Acid: Much of Carceri's precipitation is normal, but on some isles, the snows and rains are acidic. Any creature exposed to acid precipitation takes 1d6 acid damage per tier for each round of exposure.

Swamp Water: Carceri's waters are cold and filthy, but not necessarily harmful. Because the water is dirty, the range of light sources underwater is reduced by 2 squares.

Some deeper bogs have flowing currents, ranging from a strength of 1 to 4 (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 45).

Water, Acidic: As swamp water (above), but any creature that ends its turn in the water takes ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends). A bloodied creature that fails a saving throw against this ongoing acid damage is blinded until the end of its next turn.

Water, Freezing: As swamp water (above), but any creature that starts its turn in freezing water takes 1d6 cold damage, and the Endurance DC to avoid losing healing surges from suffocation increases by 2.

ERISHANI

A veil of mist floats atop the silver waters of the Astral Sea, parting at length to reveal a blue-gray landscape broken by withered rock and gnarled gray trees that clutch the stones tightly. There is no sun or moon; rather, the light of the realm comes from a towering golden statue in the center of the island. The humanoid shape is locked in a half-kneeling posture: It appears to be poised to move forward, extending a hand in front of itself. However, the hand is not out in a shielding gesture. It seems as if the figure is about to attack, but it has not moved in thousands of years.

This is the realm of the golden monolith—a broken, unstable graveyard realm roughly one hundred miles in diameter that surrounds a petrified primordial. If the deities know who this great entity was, they aren't saying. Erishani is the name of the only angel known to have fought in the battle that shattered this realm, and she is long gone. Legends say that Erishani was responsible for petrifying the golden primordial, but that claim is by no means certain.

MAJOR AREAS

Erishani was the dominion of a deity who perished in the Dawn War and has been forgotten since. It once held cities, but most were wiped away when the primordial invaded the realm during the War. The broken husks and withered remains of what must once have been fearsome war machines and siege engines used in the Dawn War are scattered everywhere in Erishani, bearing moldering testament to the fury of the battle that transpired there.

New inhabitants have moved into the dominion since that time, however, thanks to the fact that the

domain's elemental energy makes it comfortable for outsiders and other mortals.

A few of the dominion's better-known sites are described below.

CHAOS BOG

Radiating around the sunken knee of the Golden Monolith is a stretch of Erishani that's clearly under enormous elemental pressure. It is a treacherous bog made up of disparate elements: a soup of scalding mud, partly submerged pieces of molten rock that give rise to clouds of acidic mist, and jets of air so cold as to freeze intruders in their tracks. The land is unstable and can be shaped by a powerful will (see "Environmental Features," page 109).

Creatures commonly associated with the Elemental Chaos are plentiful here, rising from the murk as though spontaneously generated. Perhaps there are portals to the Plane Below at the bottom of the bog, and creatures swim up through the morass with no idea that they are about to emerge beneath the monolith.

THE GOLDEN MONOLITH

The petrified primordial waits, eternally silent, poised on one knee, its other leg half submerged in the ground, and its arm raised to unleash a destructive blast. Its elemental nature infuses the shattered dominion. No deities have been able to bend the land to their will and claim the territory for themselves. Even Erathis's project to reclaim the Lattice of Heaven regards the Golden Monolith as a problem to address in the far future.

If the gods couldn't do it, it's no surprise that mortal magic has failed to touch the statue. There is clearly energy of unknown origin circulating inside the monolith. The truly daring find it warm to the



touch. The creature is not dead—just slumbering until some conjunction of events unleashes it once more.

The monolith is big enough—over 170 feet tall—to be seen from every corner of the dominion. Even though it does not move its head and its eyes are blank orbs, those who walk upon Erishani or fly around its perimeter have the unsettling feeling that the monolith seems to be watching them.

RHYM KATAL

Rhym Katal is a rarity; it's a pirate haven that aims to stay well clear of githyanki tribute or githyanki enforcement. Hidden within a cove secluded by high rocks somewhere along the edge or the bottom of Erishani, Rhym Katal is populated by the crew and hangers-on of between six and twenty-four ships of all sizes and quality. The current pirate queen of the haven, an eladrin with the uncommonly short name of Mal, has enslaved a few of the demons that slithered out of the Chaos Bog and enlisted some other creatures in her service. So far, the pirates seem safe from outside forces. Perhaps they chose their hiding place well. Or perhaps the githyanki of Tu'narath and the deities of the dominions prefer not to send powerful forces into the area around the Golden Monolith, avoiding the risk of an inadvertent triggering event.

HOVEL AND TWISP

No one knows how this collection of huts, shanties, and tents with rain-collecting, cup-shaped roofs got the whimsical part of its name, though the first part is clear enough. Perhaps the inhabitants want to be thought of as innocuous. Given that they are mainly the descendants of mortal primordial cultists who hoped to reawaken the monolith, their desire to keep a low profile is understandable. The pirates of Rhym Katal mostly leave them alone, though it's not clear whether that's because Hovel and Twisp's inhabitants are too poor to provide good sport or because the descendants of the cultists have magical power to adequately defend themselves.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Golden Monolith holds a number of adventure threads of its own. For a connected set of two encounters, see the following page.

Abyssal Portal: The Chaos Bog could be a gateway for powerful demons from the Abyss, using this dominion's remoteness as cover and the humble inhabitants of Hovel and Twisp as agents or fodder.

Pirate Haven: Rhym Katal has the advantage of owing allegiance only to itself. Characters who want to sample the pirate's life could do worse than to crack a few skulls, beat down or ally with Mal, and buckle swashes.

Elder Magic: The real prize of Erishani might be only indirectly connected to the Golden Monolith—it

could be the knowledge of the magic that could freeze a primordial for eons. A mission to the bottom of the Chaos Bog might uncover the secrets of the arcane or divine magic that accomplished the deed.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Like all shattered dominions, Erishani is prone to all sorts of planar hazards and fantastic terrain (*Manual of the Planes*, page 21). Abyssal wellsprings and elemental seepage are common, as are burning vapors, vacuum rifts, demonic slime, and entropic fissures. In addition, because of the primordial elemental energy flowing through it, the landscape of Erishani is not as fixed as that of other astral dominions.

CHAOS SPOTS

Certain locations in the dominion are in constant (if sluggish) flux, especially the Chaos Bog and isolated "chaos spots" elsewhere in the dominion.

Effect: While in a chaos spot, a creature can attempt to stabilize or alter the area as though it were unstable (*Manual of the Planes*, page 10), albeit with more difficulty (increase all DCs by 5).

Usage: Put a chaos spot in an encounter to add an extra layer of depth to combat, as each side tries to turn the environment into terrain that suits its needs.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Erishani is home to a mixture of elemental and astral creatures. Meanwhile, the pirates of Rhym Katal circle as they like, sometimes dodging away to avoid the notice of roving githyanki pirates.

Level 14 Encounter (XP 5,800)

- ◆ 2 chasmes (level 14 skirmisher, *Manual of the Planes* 121)
- ◆ 1 githyanki mindslicer (level 13 artillery, MM 128)
- ◆ 2 githyanki warriors (level 12 soldier, MM 128)
- ◆ 2 nightmares (level 13 skirmisher, MM 196)

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,200)

- ◆ 1 air archon zephyrhaunt (level 16 lurker, *Manual of the Planes* 114)
- ◆ 2 azer ragers (level 15 brute, MM 22)
- ◆ 1 azer taskmaster (level 17 controller, MM 23)
- ◆ 1 ice archon hailscourge (level 16 artillery, MM 20)
- ◆ 1 demonic slime hazard (level 16 obstacle, *Manual of the Planes* 23)

Level 21 Encounter (XP 19,500)

- ◆ 2 angels of vengeance (level 19 elite brute, MM 17)
- ◆ 1 entropic fissure hazard (level 22 lurker, *Manual of the Planes* 24)
- ◆ 2 marut blademasters (level 21 soldier, MM 185)
- ◆ 1 marut concordant (level 22 elite controller, MM 185)

ADVENTURE: THE MONOLITH STIRS

The Golden Monolith of Erishani has spent untold ages marking the spot where the primordials and the gods clashed—never stirring . . . until now.

ENCOUNTER 1: THE HAND OF THE MONOLITH

Encounter Level 27 (55,150 XP)

SETUP

1 glabrezu (G)
2 dread wraiths (W)
3 lich vestiges (L)
2 mariliths (M)
Illyram Brackz (E)

Illyram Brackz, an eladrin lich, is seeking to gain control over the Golden Monolith in a particular way: by making it his new phylactery. Mortal magic alone is not enough, and for this reason he has bound several powerful demons to his will and harvested their magic to attune his spells to the trapped primordial's magic with the hope that he can initiate an exchange of energy and eventual control. His goal might seem ridiculous were it not for his demonstrable results—last week Illyram caused the Golden Monolith to raise its outstretched arm a few feet.

With the monolith as his phylactery, Illyram would become virtually unkillable, since destroying him would entail destroying the Golden Monolith, which seems impossible. Also, if Illyram found a way to control the primordial, he could become a major danger to the dominions of the deities.

The characters have to fight through the demons and a trio of lich vestiges to attack Illyram, who is currently enacting his ritual on top of the primordial's outstretched hand. Two insubstantial dread wraiths are hidden inside the golden arm and cannot be detected by any normal means.

As the characters arrive on top of the hand, read:

On the back of the great statue's hand stands an eladrin wizard. A circle of burning runes revolves around him, as do three shadowy, wraithlike duplicate images of him. You can see demonic forms writhing in agony in the cloud of magic, as the lich drains their essence to power his ritual.

The lich and his vestiges are not alone. At his side stands a hulking hyena-faced demon with giant pincers and two six-armed creatures that are half snakes, half eerily beautiful female humans. Their eyes are blank and vacant—clearly, they are being magically controlled.

"More sources," croaks the wizard in a voice from beyond the grave. He smiles cruelly as he points at you. "Bring their corpses to me!"

TACTICS

The glabrezu takes advantage of its fly speed to land among the characters, where it can best provide flank-ing for the mariliths. Those demons charge straight in to engage opposing defenders. The dread wraiths are poised inside the golden arm, waiting 1 round until the melee warriors rush forward, so they can fall upon lingering spellcasters and ranged combatants. The lich vestiges unleash *shadow rays* at the characters, waiting to hurl their *orb of obliteration* until one of the demons is bloodied or until one of the characters breaks through the demons. Illyram takes no part in this fight, since he is working on his ritual (see "Development").

DEVELOPMENT

Dealing damage to Illyram is the key to victory in this encounter. While he performs his ritual, Illyram is immune to all effects other than damage. If he becomes bloodied, the ritual is disrupted. At this point, Illyram shrieks in rage and teleports to the monolith's head as a free action. If this occurs, the demons break free of his control and turn their

3 Lich Vestiges (L)	Level 26 Minion
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 2,250 each
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +19; darkvision
Necromantic Aura (Necrotic) aura 2; any living creature that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 5 necrotic damage.	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 40; Fortitude 36, Reflex 40, Will 38	
Immune disease, poison; Resist 20 necrotic	
Speed 6	
⚔ Death's Touch (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
+30 vs. AC; 10 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).	
☾ Shadow Ray (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Ranged 20; +30 vs. Reflex; 10 necrotic damage, or 15 necrotic damage if the target is an arcane power user (such as a wizard).	
✱ Orb of Obliteration (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire, Necrotic	
Two, three, or four lich vestiges acting on the same initiative count can use their standard actions to hurl a single orb of black fire that detonates on impact. Make one attack roll: Area burst 5 within 10 of one of the lich vestiges; +30 vs. Reflex; 5 fire and necrotic damage per lich vestige making the attack, and ongoing fire and necrotic damage equal to 5 per lich vestige making the attack (save ends).	
Alignment Evil	Languages Abyssal, Common
Skills Arcana +24	
Str 11 (+13)	Dex 12 (+14) Wis 13 (+14)
Con 14 (+15)	Int 22 (+19) Cha 18 (+17)

indignation on any remaining lich vestiges and dread wraiths before escaping. They do not attack the characters again unless they are attacked first.

Glabrezu (G) Level 23 Elite Brute

Huge elemental humanoid (demon) XP 10,200

Initiative +14 Senses Perception +18; truesight 6

HP 520; Bloodied 260; see also *arcane fury*

AC 39; Fortitude 42, Reflex 37, Will 37

Resist 20 variable (3/encounter)

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8, fly 8

Action Points 1

⚔ **Pincer Claw** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.

⚔ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)

The glabrezu makes two pincer claw attacks. If both claws hit the same target, the target is grabbed if the glabrezu so chooses.

⚡ **Abyssal Bolt** (minor; at-will)

Ranged 10; +24 vs. Reflex; 3d4 + 7 damage.

⚡ **Blasphemous Word** (minor; encounter) ♦ **Psychic**

Close burst 5; targets enemies; +24 vs. Will; 1d12 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the glabrezu's next turn.

⚡ **Chaos Word** (minor; recharge [1])

Close burst 5; targets enemies; +24 vs. Fortitude; 1d12 + 7 damage. This damage bypasses all resistances.

Arcane Fury (free, when first bloodied; encounter)

The glabrezu teleports 8 squares, recharges its *blasphemous word* and *chaos word* powers, and makes an *abyssal bolt*, *blasphemous word*, or *chaos word* attack.

Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common

Skills Arcana +23, Bluff +19, Intimidate +19

Str 26 (+19) Dex 17 (+14) Wis 14 (+13)

Con 20 (+16) Int 24 (+18) Cha 16 (+14)

2 Mariliths (M) Level 24 Elite Skirmisher

Large elemental humanoid (demon) XP 12,100 each

Initiative +22 Senses Perception +21; darkvision

HP 440; Bloodied 220

AC 38 (42 when using *shroud of steel*); Fortitude 36, Reflex 35, Will 33

Resist 20 variable (3/encounter)

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8

Action Points 1

⚔ **Scimitar** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage (crit 6d10 + 29).

⚔ **Hacking Blades** (free, when an adjacent enemy misses the marilith with a melee attack; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

The marilith makes a scimitar attack against the enemy.

⚔ **Shroud of Steel** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

The marilith makes two scimitar attacks and uses its other scimitars to parry incoming attacks, gaining a +4 bonus (+1 per scimitar) to AC until the start of its next turn.

⚔ **Weapon Dance** (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ **Weapon**

The marilith makes six scimitar attacks. Each time it hits, the marilith shifts 1 square.

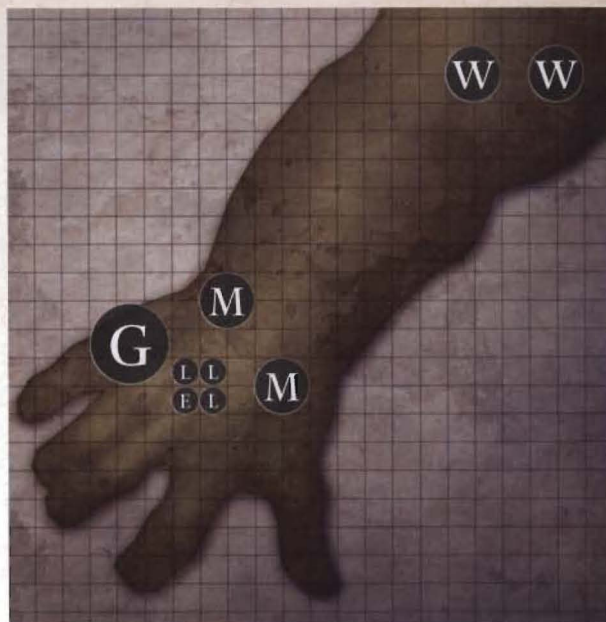
Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal

Skills Bluff +23, Insight +21, Intimidate +23, Stealth +25

Str 28 (+21) Dex 26 (+20) Wis 19 (+16)

Con 20 (+17) Int 14 (+14) Cha 22 (+18)

Equipment 6 scimitars



ENCOUNTER 1: THE HAND OF THE MONOLITH

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Falling: The arm of the Golden Monolith is a treacherous place to be. A creature that falls from the arm takes 12d10 falling damage from hitting the ground below and must climb up 120 feet (Athletics DC 26) to rejoin the fight. (A character might instead teleport or fly, which negates the need for the Athletics check.)

2 Dread Wraiths (W) Level 25 Lurker

Large shadow humanoid (undead) XP 7,000 each

Initiative +25 Senses Perception +18; darkvision

Shroud of Night aura 5; bright light in the aura is reduced to dim light, and dim light becomes darkness.

HP 124; Bloodied 62; see also *death strike*

Regeneration 20 (if the dread wraith takes radiant damage, regeneration is negated until the end of the wraith's next turn)

AC 37; Fortitude 33, Reflex 37, Will 37

Immune disease, fear, poison; Resist 30 necrotic, insubstantial;

Vulnerable 15 radiant (see also *regeneration* above)

Speed fly 10 (hover); phasing; see also *shadow glide*

⚔ **Dread Blade** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Necrotic**

Reach 2; +28 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 9 necrotic damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

⚡ **Death Shriek** (when reduced to 0 hit points) ♦ **Psychic**

Close blast 3; targets enemies; +27 vs. Will; 4d6 + 9 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). Miss: Half damage, and the target is not dazed.

Combat Advantage ♦ **Necrotic**

The dread wraith deals an extra 3d6 necrotic damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Shadow Glide (move; encounter)

The dread wraith shifts 6 squares.

Spawn Wraith

Any humanoid killed by a dread wraith rises as a free-willed dread wraith at the start of its creator's next turn, appearing in the space where it died (or in the nearest unoccupied space). Raising the slain creature (using the *Raise Dead* ritual) does not destroy the spawned wraith.

Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Common

Skills Stealth +26

Str 18 (+16) Dex 28 (+21) Wis 12 (+13)

Con 20 (+17) Int 14 (+14) Cha 28 (+21)

ENCOUNTER 2: THE HEAD OF THE MONOLITH

Encounter Level 27 (59,100 XP)

SETUP

Illyram Brackz (E)

1 sorrowsworn soulripper (S)

2 sorrowsworn reapers (R)

1 thunderblast cyclone (T)

Illyram has fled to the head of the Golden Monolith, where he intends to complete his ritual. He has healed back to full hit points and invoked dark pacts with the creatures of the Shadowfell that granted him undeath in the first place, summoning them to aid him against the characters. When the characters arrive, they see Illyram and a thunderblast cyclone elemental, which swirls like a cloud around him. Two sorrowsworn reapers are clinging to the sides of the monolith's head, and a soulripper hides within a shallow depression that is covered by magical shadows (DC 40 Perception check to notice).

When the characters arrive at the head of the monolith, read:

The lich stands at the crown of the primordial's head, waiting for your arrival. A black cloud crackling with lightning swirls around the undead spellcaster, punctuated in its center with two gleaming red eyes. The area around the lich is dim and shadowy, as if the light is repelled by its presence.

"You have frustrated my efforts for the last time, fools," the lich says. "Now you will suffer what your idiocy has wrought!"

At his words, the great golden statue beneath your feet starts—horribly—to move.

TACTICS

In the first few rounds, the characters could pay a steep price if they try to charge Illyram, because the elemental is protecting him with its reach (as is the soulripper, with its adept positioning). If no one charges, the soulripper remains in hiding until the right moment; if it beats the characters in initiative, it readies an action to use *flutter and strike* against the first character to attack Illyram, then uses *sorrow's rush* to move into and through the main combat.

The limited size of the area can make it hard for the characters to break away from their attackers, and the sorrowsworn reapers take advantage of this. The thunderblast cyclone uses burst attacks to strike characters who bunch up, though it has been commanded by Illyram not to strike the sorrowsworn with its attacks unless that's unavoidable.

If Illyram is slain before his elemental is, the creature goes into a destructive rage and makes no further attempts to avoid the sorrowsworn with its attacks.

Illyram Brackz (E)

Level 24 Elite Controller

Medium natural humanoid (undead)

XP 12,100

Initiative +14

Senses Perception +14; darkvision

Necromantic Aura (Necrotic) aura 5; any living creature that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 5 necrotic damage.

HP 362; **Bloodied** 181

Regeneration 10 (if Illyram takes radiant damage, regeneration doesn't function on his next turn)

AC 38; **Fortitude** 33, **Reflex** 38, **Will** 38

Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic

Saving Throws +2

Speed 6

Action Points 1

☞ **Shadow Ray** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Necrotic**

Ranged 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 7 necrotic damage.

☞ **Necrotic Orb** (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ **Necrotic**

Ranged 20; +28 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 7 necrotic damage, and the target is stunned until the end of Illyram's next turn.

☞ **Entropic Pulse** (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ **Necrotic**

Area burst 2 within 20; +28 vs. Reflex; 6d6 + 7 necrotic damage.

Indestructible

When Illyram is reduced to 0 hit points, his body and possessions crumble into dust, but he is not destroyed. He reappears (along with his possessions) in 1d10 days within 1 square of his phylactery, unless the phylactery is also found and destroyed.

Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ **Healing**

Illyram spends a healing surge and regains 90 hit points. He gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of his next turn.

Alignment Evil

Languages Common, Elven

Skills Arcana +24, History +24, Insight +19

Str 12 (+13)

Dex 15 (+14)

Wis 15 (+14)

Con 18 (+16)

Int 25 (+19)

Cha 21 (+17)

Sorrowsworn Soulripper (S)

Level 25 Skirmisher

Medium shadow humanoid

XP 7,000

Initiative +27

Senses Perception +27; darkvision

HP 236; **Bloodied** 118

AC 39; **Fortitude** 35, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 36; see also *bleak visage*

Speed 10; see also *sorrow's rush*

☞ **Claw** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psychic**

+30 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 plus 2d8 psychic damage.

☞ **Flutter and Strike** (standard; recharge ☞ ☞ ☞) ♦ **Psychic, Teleportation**

The sorrowsworn soulripper teleports 10 squares and makes a claw attack, gaining combat advantage against its target.

☞ **Sorrow's Rush** (standard; encounter) ♦ **Psychic**

The sorrowsworn soulripper moves up to 10 squares and makes three claw attacks at any points during its move. Each attack must be made against a different target.

Bleak Visage ♦ **Fear**

Melee and ranged attacks made against the sorrowsworn soulripper take a -2 penalty to the attack roll.

Combat Advantage

The sorrowsworn soulripper deals an extra 3d6 damage on attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages Common

Skills Insight +27, Stealth +30

Str 24 (+19)

Dex 36 (+25)

Wis 31 (+22)

Con 28 (+21)

Int 18 (+16)

Cha 22 (+18)

2 Sorrowsworn Reapers (R)		Level 27 Soldier
Medium shadow humanoid		XP 11,000 each
Initiative +26	Senses Perception +24; darkvision	
HP 254; Bloodied 127		
AC 41; Fortitude 38, Reflex 39, Will 38; see also <i>bleak visage</i>		
Speed 8, climb 8 (spider climb)		
⚔ Sorrow's Scythe (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+32 vs. AC; 4d10 + 8 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sorrowsworn reaper's next turn.		
⚔ Reaping Blow (standard; recharge ii) ♦ Healing, Psychic		
Requires scythe; +32 vs. AC; 4d10 + 24 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sorrowsworn reaper's next turn. If the target is reduced to 0 hit points or fewer by this attack, the sorrowsworn reaper regains 60 hit points.		
Bleak Visage ♦ Fear		
Melee and ranged attacks made against the sorrowsworn reaper take a -2 penalty to the attack roll.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common
Skills Insight +24, Intimidate +26		
Str 26 (+21)	Dex 32 (+24)	Wis 22 (+19)
Con 30 (+23)	Int 18 (+17)	Cha 26 (+21)
Equipment robes, scythe		

Thunderblast Cyclone (T)		Level 26 Elite Artillery
Huge elemental magical beast (air, water)		XP 18,000
Initiative +24	Senses Perception +16	
HP 382; Bloodied 191		
AC 42; Fortitude 40, Reflex 42, Will 35		
Immune disease, poison; Resist 30 lightning, 30 thunder		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed fly 10 (hover)		
Action Points 1		
⚡ Lightning Arc (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning		
Reach 3; +29 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 lightning damage.		
⚡ Lightning Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning		
Ranged 10; +29 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 lightning damage.		
⚡ Thunderclap (standard; at-will) ♦ Thunder		
Close burst 2; +28 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 9 thunder damage.		
⚡ Charged Mist (standard; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Lightning		
Close burst 3; automatic hit; 1d10 + 9 lightning damage, and the thunderblast cyclone becomes insubstantial until the end of its next turn.		
⚡ Lightning Storm (standard; begins uncharged; recharges when the thunderblast cyclone uses <i>charged mist</i>) ♦ Lightning, Thunder		
Area burst 3 within 20; +29 vs. Reflex; 6d8 + 9 lightning and thunder damage. Miss: Half damage.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Primordial
Str 25 (+20)	Dex 32 (+24)	Wis 17 (+16)
Con 29 (+22)	Int 8 (+12)	Cha 15 (+15)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

After Illyram reaches the head, the Golden Monolith begins a random pattern of activity, alternating between rumbling and shaking, for as long as Illyram lives. Each time the monolith changes from rumbling to shaking, it fires a bolt of energy from its massive upraised hand—not at the characters, but out into the Astral Sea.

The monolith's head is 170 feet above the ground.

Monolith Rumbling: The Golden Monolith's elemental energy has been partially awakened by Illyram's magic, and the primordial's body is now rumbling (pitching and rocking). While it is rumbling, any creature that is struck by a critical hit or bloodied by an attack must make a DC 26 Acrobatics check or fall prone.

After 1d4 rounds of rumbling, the monolith erupts at the end of the round and then begins shaking during the next round.

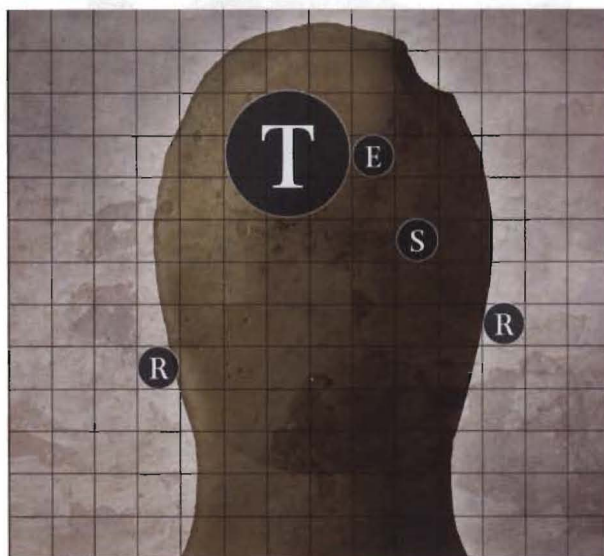
Monolith Erupting: When the Golden Monolith erupts, it fires from its hand a burst of golden energy, which speeds off into the Astral Sea. A few rounds later, the characters see a fiery golden cloud pluming into the sky from a distant explosion.

What is destroyed by the monolith's first blast is up to you to determine. The event could be beneficial to the characters, or not. If the characters don't stop Illyram and his ritual before the monolith repeats the cycle, the monolith shifts its arm position and fires again. Whatever the monolith destroys with its next shot should definitely have a negative effect on the characters, as should any further shots fired.

After erupting, the monolith begins shaking.

Monolith Shaking: The monolith notices the presence of creatures on its head and spends 1 round trying to shake them off. Each creature on it must spend a move action or make a DC 31 Acrobatics check to cling to the monolith's surface; failure means the creature is hurled from the head 50 feet in a random direction. Unconscious or otherwise helpless creatures are thrown automatically, unless an adjacent creature spends a move action to hold the creature down (in addition to maintaining its own position on the head). Thrown creatures take 17d10 falling damage, and ascending the monolith from the ground back to its head (170 feet) requires a DC 31 Athletics check.

After shaking, the monolith starts the cycle over and begins rumbling again.



Glimpsed through the pale gray of its surrounding color veil, Kalandurren's waterfalls and peaks show little sign that the dominion's deity is dead—Amoth (*Manual of the Planes*, page 96), the former master of this realm, was slain centuries ago in a battle against the demon princes Orcus, Demogorgon, and Rimmon. Once a traveler pierces the veil, the truth becomes apparent. A forbidding black island floats on a dead-gray sea that flows endlessly toward the observer, falling off the edge of the dominion in an endless waterfall. Overlapping stepped plateaus, each ringed with waterfalls, rise toward two immense mountains that jut into the sky like pillars. Formerly, a miniature sun and moon capped the mountains, and the dominion knew both day and night. The orbs are dark now, snow falls from a perpetually steel-gray sky, and the wind blasting down from the steppes carries the hunting cries of demons.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

The demons that slew Amoth are gone, but lesser demons roam the land at will, challenged only by the Doomguard, a magically potent army of nihilists that share the demons' taste for chaos. The demons and the Doomguard fight an ongoing low-intensity war over the battered ruins of the realm, but the conflict has one bizarre zone of truce. What was originally a

temple to the ideals of law inside the ruin of Amoth's palace has been turned into a gladiatorial arena where demons, Doomguard, and all other visitors are compelled to sit side by side as spectators, focusing all their attention on the bloodshed in the arena. Adventurers can visit this area safely, provided they have the strength and speed to get to it and get away.

MAJOR AREAS

Kalandurren used to be filled with fortified castles and homes of the exalted and angels of Amoth. The ruins of those structures are everywhere, and they haven't necessarily been picked clean, since demons or Doomguard cut short outsiders' foraging attempts. Two of the dominion's most well-known locations are described below.

GOD'S DICE ARENA

In Exalhus, the city at the heart of Kalandurren, there once stood a golden temple dedicated to law and justice, gleaming in the light of the sun atop the mountains. Its light went out when Amoth was slain. The site languished for centuries, untouched by the demons, until the Doomguard burned and razed it.

As soon as the fires started to lick the temple walls, however, a strange energy flowed from the ruins, filling the surrounding Doomguard with hope, certainty, honor, and—above all—a sense of purpose.

That feeling was abhorrent to the nihilists, and many of those that felt the first stirrings of Amoth's sleeping power went mad on the spot. Those that survived found themselves intrigued by the traces of law and goodness that surrounded the temple. They discovered that by exposing themselves to the positive feelings for a short time, it made the excitement of committing destructive acts more intense.

Becoming addicted to the sinful rush of the vestiges of lawful thought, the Doomguard built their fortress in the ruins of Exalhus. The temple had contained an arenalike amphitheater for settling trials by combat. When they cleared the arena, the Doomguard discovered that not all of its magic had been destroyed—the wards that prevented spectators from fighting one another were still intact. In this environment, the Doomguard could lounge for a few minutes or hours in peace, without worrying about each other's plotting—as long as a gladiator was shedding blood and smashing bones in the arena below them.

Fights in the arena are most entertaining when one or more of the combatants have lawful demeanors. Lawful combatants feel compelled to fight to the death, a situation the Doomguard find delicious, particularly when such captives are pitted against their own allies. Player character combatants might be



able to shake off the compulsion, but lesser warriors have no chance.

When the demons came to understand what was occurring in the arena, many of them found ways to sneak or teleport into the stands. Once in the stands, the demons are equally helpless against the arena's immense antiviolence auras. Over the decades, the Doomguard and the demons have come to an understanding for sharing spectatorship in the arena, although they frequently fight each other on its bloody sands. They also compete to see who can bring in the best gladiator slaves and most entertaining victims.

The arena is an amphitheater set around a semi-circular pit with a 60-foot radius. Below the sands dyed red with blood lie the remains of Amoth's high altar, which is the focal point of Kalandurren's law-aligned energy.

Group combats (with equal numbers of foes on both sides) are as common as individual duels, and the outcome of a duel—death or mercy—is determined by a pair of six-sided bone dice carried by High Lord Nariche, the current leader of the Doomguard. Enterprising and semisuicidal gamblers from across the worlds venture into God's Dice Arena. Gambling with demons and Doomguard on the outcome of a fight, or whether the throw of the dice will dispense death or mercy, provides some visitors with a rush that can't be matched.

There is an element of danger for the audience, however. If at the end of the match Nariche rolls a total of seven on the God's Dice, as they're known, the victorious gladiator has won the right to challenge anyone in the amphitheater to an immediate death match in the arena.

The winner is entitled to all that belonged to the loser (including freedom, equipment, coin, and slaves), and the loser is made a slave, if he or she survives. Any spectator can be challenged in this way, strong or weak, and this fact is not always made clear to new visitors.

INVOLVING THE CHARACTERS

Characters of all levels can be drawn into battles in God's Dice Arena, whether as rebellious gladiators or challenged spectators when Nariche rolls a 7.

Ironically, the arena represents one of the most promising ways to survive in Kalandurren—provided the combatant can keep winning battles. It is also a way to win an audience with Nariche, who always attends (and can be challenged just as anyone else can be).

The Doomguard favors creatures infused with lawful tendencies or divine energy for the arena, such as devils, maruts, and even angels, but characters could encounter virtually any creature from the Astral Sea on the bloody sands.

RIMMON'S CAIRN

Before he was struck down, Amoth slew Rimmon. The demon prince's body is entombed in a magically warded cairn in the shadow of one of the dominion's great mountains. Despite Kalandurren's population of insane nihilists and demons, no one has succeeded in penetrating the cairn.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

One feature common to Kalandurren is areas of land that have been imprinted by violence.

SOULSHOCKED GROUND

Scattered patches of the arena floor, and some areas of Kalandurren's ruins, have become soulshocked ground.

Effect: When a creature leaves a square of soulshocked ground, it grants combat advantage until it reenters the square. Once a creature is affected by a square of soulshocked ground, it is immune to further instances of the effect from that square until the end of the encounter. Soulshocked squares cannot be recognized until the effect occurs.

Usage: This effect keeps the arena fights bloody, and both demons and the Doomguard know how to take advantage of soulshocked ground; they will occupy the soulshocked square, keeping their enemy granting combat advantage.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

A war-torn place unclaimed by any deity, Kalandurren is full of dangers. Roving bands of Doomguard and demons are common, and characters can encounter any of the monsters presented in this book or *Manual of the Planes*, particularly in God's Dice Arena.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,950)

- ◆ 2 cambion hellswords (level 8 brute, MM 39)
- ◆ 1 Doomguard sneak [doppelganger assassin] (level 8 lurker, MM 71)
- ◆ 1 Doomguard captain [dragonborn gladiator] (level 10 soldier, MM 86)
- ◆ 1 succubus (level 9 controller, MM 67)

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,400)

- ◆ 2 warder devils (level 16 soldier, page 139)
- ◆ 2 immoliths (level 15 controller, MM 56)
- ◆ 4 vrock demons (level 13 skirmisher, MM 58)

Level 24 Encounter (XP 33,200)

- ◆ 1 death knight (dragonborn paladin) (level 25 elite soldier, MM 51)
- ◆ 1 doomlord [dragonborn champion] (level 26 soldier, MM 87)
- ◆ 1 rakshasa dread knight (level 24 soldier, MM 218)
- ◆ 1 rot slinger (level 22 artillery, MM 223)

PANDEMONIUM

Dark tunnels weave together for hundreds of miles before opening onto caverns filled with terrors out of nightmares. The cold inhabits tunnels and caves alike, until sudden cruel warmth heralds the arrival of an abomination that melts flesh and bone.

But before all else is the ever-present wind, a harsh, scouring, maddening force that reduces mortals to gibbering ruin . . . and eventually to bone and ash.

This is Pandemonium, a vast, twisted shell of a ruined world that somehow attracts more than its share of mortal exiles and misplaced outsiders.

Some say that the tunnels are the veins of Tharizdun, and the stone his flesh—but if this is so, then they are the cast-off shell of a deity long since departed from the dominion he created, and the wind is his parting breath, infused with the madness of the Far Realm.

Pandemonium is not a place anyone wants to visit for an extended period, but the promise of ancient treasures hidden in its catacombs draws adventurers.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

Many souls of the deceased arrive in Pandemonium rather than in their deity's dominion. The outsiders who end up in this awful place are known as the banished. If they can escape from Pandemonium's darkness, they never come back.

Pandemonium has no central authority—no god-king passes down commandments from a throne of any sort—and so the folk of this dark place subsist wholly on their own. They live a skulking existence, roving from place to place for food or clean water, fighting those creatures that can be fought, and hiding from those more powerful. It's not unheard of for visitors to venture into Pandemonium, searching for treasure; a few of them even find their way back out again. Those too maddened to escape settle in the dominion, selling what trinkets or equipment they find on their journeys to those who come later.

Visitors to the dominion might feel as though they have entered a sprawling mental asylum without doors. Since madness takes many forms, the folk of Pandemonium vary widely in their behavior—some are violent, some are evasive and sneaky, and others are dull and vacant. Not one of them ever truly becomes accustomed to Pandemonium's gales, and every day is its own small torment. Whatever their standard behavior, however, the inhabitants of Pandemonium tend toward wild extremes: the angry ones attack anyone who looks at them the wrong way, the compulsive liars cannot tell the truth even if they want to, and those battered to catatonia by the winds stagger about the streets like zombies. Some of the

sane folk seem the craziest, raging against fate and desperately searching for a way out.

The Doomguard maintains a presence in this forlorn place; their philosophy of entropy and (particularly) fatalism actually makes sense in Pandemonium. The Doomguard actively promote banished outsiders that prove their skill in battle and devotion to the cause, offering them passage to Kalandurren. Kalandurren might not be a better home, particularly not for those recruited to fight in God's Dice Arena. But to someone seeking escape from the winds of Pandemonium, any refuge will do.

Pandemonium is home to a number of monstrous cults, particularly in the unmappable Agathion caverns. An abomination called a malediction (page 131) prefers this dominion to all other homes. The Dying Scream, a cult of intangible undead creatures (such as ghosts and wraiths) that can slip in and out of their cavern sanctuaries, worships maledictions as the cast-off detritus of long-dead deities. The cultists love to sacrifice intelligent creatures to their ever-screaming masters. Immortal berbalangs and vampire lords maintain shrines in this dominion as well, their minds shattered by long years of constant wind.

MAJOR AREAS

Some folk of Pandemonium band together for mutual protection, but these rare enclaves are prone to threats from roving beasts and infighting caused by the madness brought on by the winds, so they are quickly swept away. A few exceptions exist, but even these balance on the edge between ruination from within and without. Described below are three that have lasted longer than most.

KEENER'S WALL

Perhaps the most civilized place in Pandemonium (considering what passes for civility in the Howling Depths), this century-old, high-walled settlement stands in a deep cavern at the edge of the frosty expanse known as Wintervault (*Manual of the Planes*, page 107). Enjoying an uneasy peace based on trade with the nearby frost giants of the lower catacombs, folk here live relatively normal lives (albeit with frequent outbursts of mad gibbering or random violence, just to pass the time). More than half the populace is functional but insane from the constant winds and occasional blizzards.

Civic life centers on the increasingly weathered temple of Erathis, whose missionaries established the city in their deity's name. Keener's Wall largely failed as a settlement and religious center, but over time, it collected a fair number of curious (and less than sane) folk.



Keener's Wall makes a good safe house for adventurers hunting for Pandemonium's fabled treasures. Rooms are available at the red-carpeted Broken Jaw Inn (because patrons frequently attack each other, the color of the carpets conceals any bloodshed). Sanity is suspect in Keener's Wall, so visitors would be well served to feign mental illness of some sort—an illness that might become permanent if they stay too long in the Howling Depths.

Secret adherents of the Bleak Cabal from the stronghold of Madhouse (*Manual of the Planes*, page 107) watch for new arrivals, especially those that have magical secrets that might further the cabal's cause.

MYRIAD OF GALES

Formed by a minstrel planeswalker named Catalan the Mad, the Myriad of Gales college accepts those bards brave enough to travel to Pandemonium in search of the music of madness. Students expose themselves to the winds for hours on end, seeking inspiration. The college has gained a reputation in the dominion as a place of refuge for those unfortunate souls trapped unawares in the worst gales, but the bards of Myriad of Gales are more interested in gleaning the musical secrets from a guest's mind than saving his or her sanity. Adventurers trapped here become prisoners of a sort, purposefully exposed to the winds so that the bards can listen to their screams and find inspiration.

The mad bards have much in common with the Bleak Cabal, which has spurred constant competition between the groups, who would eliminate each other if they could.

VECNA'S TOWER

Rumors, divinations, and mysterious disappearances lead to agreement on one point—Vecna, the god of secrets, maintains a stronghold somewhere in the depths of Pandemonium. Some say that Vecna's Tower functions as the deity's dominion. Others say that it is merely a great black tower full of undead, and the winged beings riding the winds of the tunnels are only phantoms and shadows, not angels enforcing their master's secrecy.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Adventurers are never without foes in the swirling depths of Pandemonium. Though characters of any level find challenges aplenty, because Pandemonium is a dangerous realm (especially for heroic tier characters) and devoid of central authority (no deities for epic tier characters to defy or devil princes for them to face), it makes an excellent battleground for paragon tier characters and a good transitional area for characters of all levels. Here are three

adventure ideas, one at each tier, for those visiting Pandemonium.

HEROIC TIER: TO THE RESCUE

The ramshackle town of Keener's Wall is constantly under threat from roving bands of gibbering humanoids or monsters twisted by the winds. Adventurers can quickly build a name for themselves by shielding these folk from the dangers of the realm. The folk of Pandemonium cannot pay much, but they are grateful and pleased to be aided without the expectation of a return. In addition, they might receive hints and rumors of great treasure awaiting them in the caverns and tunnels beyond Keener's Wall.

PARAGON TIER: EXPLORATION

Many would pay well to have someone map Pandemonium's seemingly infinite depths and chart all its numerous portals. A number of explorers have tried and failed to do so, but the rewards and recognition would be great indeed for someone who could succeed. In addition, Pandemonium's status as a shattered domain might attract interested deities that seek to conquer it or merge it with their own dominions. Tharzidun left his mark on the realm, and his cultists believe he will return one day. If he never returns to reclaim the portion of the dominion that was once his, it won't be for lack of cultists' screaming sacrifices deep in the tunnels of wind.

EPIC TIER: INTO THE DEPTHS

Rumors say that powerful magic and great rewards lie in wait deep in the recesses of the dominion, guarded by increasingly powerful, insane horrors. Not only might the characters uncover the riches of ages past, from as far back as the Dawn War, they also might recover the lost equipment of the adventurers that have fallen before them, making the variety of loot recovered vast in scope. The Bleak Cabal also takes interest in adventurers of this level, sending agents to recruit or slay them as needed.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Pandemonium is a harsh, brutal environment, made worse by the infamous and destructive maddening wind and mindscouring gusts that frequently occur.

MADDENING WIND

Pandemonium is filled at all times with a howling wind that rushes through its twisting tunnels. Some believe that the wind is the last breath of the deities slain here, while others believe it is a curse laid upon the dominion by a great primordial of wind and thunder. Regardless, the wind wears at the minds and souls of those caught in it. Even those who have escaped the dominion say they can still hear echoes of the wailing howl.

Treat the maddening wind as an environmental danger (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 158) requiring a DC 20 Endurance check. Any creature that has lost a healing surge to the maddening wind takes a -2 penalty to Will and to Intelligence-, Wisdom-, and Charisma-based skill checks until it takes an extended rest.

Other common environmental hazards include cloudspores (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 67), illusions and illusory walls shaped by the winds (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 68), and whirlwinds (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 69).

UNPREDICTABLE CLIMATE

The winds of Pandemonium can change radically in terms of temperature and pressure, varying the ambient conditions from arctic to tropical heat at a moment's notice. Characters prepared for one climate might suddenly be exposed to another.

MINDSCOURING GUST

Sometimes the wind builds quickly, becoming a deadly force in itself, often in the middle of an encounter.

Mindscouring Gust

Hazard

Level 13 Lurker

XP 800

The winds build to a fever pitch, enough to tear flesh from bones and shatter minds.

Hazard: Raging winds build from an origin square and make a close blast 4 attack each round for 2d4 rounds.

Perception

Characters can't use Perception to detect this hazard.

Additional Skills: Nature

DC 23: The character realizes that the wind is building in a particular square and from which direction it will attack.

Initiative +10

Attack ♦ Psychic

Standard Action Close blast 4

Target: Each creature in blast

Attack: +16 vs. Will

Hit: 2d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Miss: Half damage.

Countermeasures

- ♦ A character who spends a minor action to protect his or her ears against the wind gains a +2 bonus to all defenses against this hazard and a -2 penalty to Perception checks.
- ♦ A character who is prone or has cover takes half damage from this hazard.

Upgrade to Elite (1,600 XP)

Increase the range to close blast 6.

Increase the DC for Nature checks by 2.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Because Pandemonium is home to all sorts of creatures tormented to insanity, encounters in the dominion can vary widely. Remember that creatures encountered in Pandemonium are just as susceptible to the maddening winds as characters are, and most have already been driven mad by exposure.

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,400)

- ♦ 1 Bleak Cabal cultist (human mage advanced to level 4 elite artillery, MM 163)
- ♦ 2 carnage demons (level 6 brute, MM 54)
- ♦ 1 mad wraith (level 6 controller, MM 266)
- ♦ 1 tiefling darkblade (level 7 lurker, MM 250)

Level 12 Encounter (XP 3,500)

- ♦ 1 balhannoth (level 13 elite lurker, MM 24)
- ♦ 1 spirit devourer (level 11 elite soldier, MM 68)
- ♦ 1 viscera devourer (level 12 controller, MM 68)

Level 18 Encounter (XP 11,600)

- ♦ 2 bodak reavers (level 18 soldier, MM 36)
- ♦ 1 nabassu gargoyle (level 18 lurker, MM 115)
- ♦ 1 nightwalker (level 20 elite brute, MM, 197)

Level 24 Encounter (XP 31,200)

- ♦ 1 dread wraith (level 25 lurker, MM 267)
- ♦ 1 earthwind ravager (level 23 controller, MM 104)
- ♦ 2 rakshasa dread knights (level 24 soldier, MM 218)
- ♦ 1 sorrowsworn soulripper (level 25 skirmisher, MM, page 242)

Behind a brilliant blue veil, a shimmering white wasteland extends for more than seven hundred miles, broken here and there by ruined cities, mesas of orange rock, and scattered oases. This is the white desert of Shom, a dominion that lost its deity in the battles of the Dawn War. Memories of the deity, known as the God of the Word, are hazy. One day Shom will have a new deity, if Erathis gets her way.

When the God of the Word created Shom, he also created its sun and its moon—gold and silver vessels that sail scores of miles above the dominion's surface. The god is long gone, but the magic vessels maintain their orbits and their defensive wards against pirates and treasure-seekers that try to steal the sun and the moon. If the mortals who populated Shom had been as impervious to harm as the dominion's satellites, Shom might have survived.

DEATH OF A GOD, RISE OF THE ILLUMIANS

When the God of the Word died during the Dawn War, his human and humanlike servitors kept the dominion's energy vibrant, allowing the dominion to survive the war more or less intact. The dead god had been one of Ioun's allies; where Ioun was devoted to study, the dead god's domain was creation. The God of the Word's servitors invited Ioun to take over the dominion, but she declined, opting to remain in Hestavar. Instead, Ioun said that the servants had done an admirable job of maintaining the dominion during the war, so they should be able to handle the dominion during a time of peace. Ioun gifted these loyal humans with two syllables of the Words of Creation: one for the mind, and one for the soul.

No single mortal could harbor two syllables of the Words of Creation, so half of the new race took one word and half took the other. It was thought that the new society would blend the best of both mind and soul. The members of the new race called themselves illumians. Sigils of Supernal words from the Words

of Creation flowed endlessly around their heads and bodies, setting them apart from other mortals.

The illumians withdrew from contact with the rest of the Astral Sea, drawing in upon themselves to study the unfolding concatenations of each of the syllables. At first, Shom flourished as the illumians created wonders and glories, rebuilding their dominion with the gift of divine energy from Ioun and what they had managed to preserve of their god's energy.

THE SHATTERING OF THE WORD

Eventually, the good centuries came to a terrible end. Those that know something about the illumians' fall consider the story to be a warning about how mortals cannot handle divine power without going mad. There is a bit more to the story than that.

The illumians' problems began because of the split between those who had the syllable of the mind and those who had the syllable of the soul. Truly sharing knowledge proved to be difficult. Successive generations of illumians moved more and more toward one syllable or the other, particularly because children could not have both syllables, and often the syllable a child had was not the one its parents would have preferred. Splinter cabals devoted to peculiarities of one or the other syllable fueled discord. Illumians of the mind, encouraged by Vecna's whispers, created conspiracy theories where none existed. Holier-than-thou arrogance characterized the soul cabals, and the worst of them "determined" that the followers of the syllable of the mind no longer truly had souls and could therefore be treated in the terrible ways their actions warranted, without any fear of wrongdoing. Asmodeus provided some brilliant suggestions for this faction to use to that end.

Civil war flared, slowed, and erupted again, repeating the cycle, adding new atrocities, and unwillingly pulling in even well-intentioned cabals. When the population was greatly reduced, the

WORDS OF CREATION

The people who were given the syllables of creation are gone, but the words themselves do not die so easily. Though the illumians have been extinct from Shom for centuries, their power lingers. A character who stumbles upon a source of illumian magic or expands the body of knowledge in Shom (for instance, discovers a new ritual) might be blessed with use of one of the syllables of creation for a day or for a single encounter.

The most powerful illumians could invoke the combined power of their sigils to burn their enemies with

searing light, blast them with thunderous sound, or heal or protect their allies. The syllables' current state is not so formidable. A display of glowing words in a language that is impossible to comprehend fully, even for speakers of Supernal, whirls around the blessed character's head at a distance of three to six inches. The words grant a small benefit for a short time, such as +1 to Reflex or Will, or +1 to initiative checks—a mere taste of what was once possible before the illumians squandered the words.

leaders of the various cabals agreed on a final solution. This is the part of the story that is well known.

The lesser-known truth is that since Ioun was unwilling to choose a side, saying that both of the syllables were important and that the illumians were abusing her gift, the illumians approached the maruts to arrive at a resolution. The cabals called a temporary truce and asked the maruts to study the situation and decide, finally, which of the two syllables should be superior to the other.

At first, the maruts attempted to avoid arbitrating the dispute, but the illumians were insistent. The arrogance and presumption that had become typical of the illumians carried over to the arbitration process. Each side assumed it was in the right and demanded that the contract to be drawn up assessed harsh penalties against the side that lost the dispute. When the maruts concluded their study, they ruled that neither faction was worthy of holding the Words of Creation. They further decided that each cabal was deserving of the penalties outlined in the contract for the loser and executed those penalties to their fullest, leaving Shom in ruins. The only illumians to survive this cleansing had already left Shom in the earlier decades of the war.

Is Ioun to blame, for giving a gift to those who were not worthy? If anyone understands the consequences of their actions, it is Ioun. Perhaps in her long view there is still something positive that will come from the wreckage of Shom.

It would be easy to blame Vecna and Asmodeus for their influence, but they didn't start the conflict. They just gave it a push.

Are the maruts to blame? They merely arbitrated the dispute they had been forced to rule on. As the apparent original creators of Supernal (page 98), the maruts might have been slightly prejudiced against the illumians for squandering their heritage. Nevertheless, no marut would admit to such bias.

INHABITANTS AND CULTURE

There are six categories of inhabitants in Shom, but none of the groups are numerous.

First are the maruts, some of whom came to Shom to execute the contract with the illumians and never left, and others who have come here in the years since. The maruts move about the sands of Shom in their mobile citadels. Their chief concern seems to be guarding particular groups of ruins—the best guess is that contracts requiring the maruts to guard the ruins, or items in the ruins, are still in force. If the maruts are guarding an area, it's probably worth looting.

Second, the other guardians in the half-buried cities: constructs, immortals, sphinxes, nagas, ghosts, golems, and numerous even more bizarre creatures and traps guard the illumians' treasures. The guardians were intended to protect against other illumians;

no one counted on the illumians suddenly being removed from the dominion's equation. The security systems and ageless guards remain intact, still standing against those who would plunder what they protect.

Third, random opportunists that sweep across the desert to acquire water at an oasis or poke around for anything valuable sticking out of the sands. Cultists of Vecna are stubbornly persistent "archeologists." Githyanki love the oases of Shom, flying in on their dragons from ships sailing outside the dominion. The quom are less predictable—when they detect traces of a fragment of Lakal, they'll go wherever their quest might take them, so they could be encountered anywhere in the wasteland or in the ruins.

Fourth, various random creatures that adventurers consider monsters, such as brown, gray, and blue dragons, wyverns, a few serpents that have escaped from Tytherion, and so on.

Fifth, various small groups of outsiders, some of whom randomly landed in Shom, but most of whom escaped from worse areas. These survivalists have formed tiny enclaves around several of the oases, but they rarely interact with strangers, instead hiding in case flyers or travelers come to the oasis. They do this because the latest arrivals to Shom have been hunting them.

Those recent additions to Shom make up the sixth group—astral giants in the service of Erathis. By hunting down the survivalist outsiders for sport, they are exceeding the orders Erathis gave them. Erathis sees Shom as the place of the next big push in her effort to restore of the Lattice of Heaven. She contracted the astral giants to sweep through Shom and try to kill the monsters that the maruts seem unwilling or unable to destroy. Several bands of astral giants are performing the mission to the best of their ability and might even appreciate help from the characters. However, at least two of the giant bands presently in Erathis's employ are bullies that have settled for starting with easier sport. The encounter that follows,

ASTRAL GIANTS

The race of astral giants is differentiated from the other more brutish and destructive giants by their advanced culture and their willingness to interact with other beings through trade and debate. When the Dawn War came, the astral giants swore allegiance to the deities in general and Erathis in particular, unlike the other giants that sided with the titans and the primordials. Over the centuries, the astral giants have settled in scattered pockets of the Astral Sea. They never feel comfortable inside functioning divine dominions, but they have no difficulty living on border islands, in shattered dominions, on astral motes, and in great palace ships of their own construction.

The astral giants currently working for Erathis in Shom are young and somewhat crude specimens of their kind.

"Purifiers of Shom," shows what happens when the characters interrupt these astral giants in the middle of their fun.

MAJOR AREAS

Ruins and oases are scattered all over Shom. A couple of notable sites are touched on below.

ORACLE OF QARMA-THAAL

A great sphinx known as the Voice of Sarpoth guards a spring between two mesas. If the waters of the spring truly provide hidden knowledge of things to come, the knowledge didn't save the illumians.

TOMBS OF ELIRHONDAS

If adventurers can avoid the maruts on the surface and the flameskulls that patrol the shallowest halls of Elirhondas, also known as the City of Philosophers, great treasures await in the depths of the place. Intricate traps protect the secrets and wealth of the former illumians' capital, as do mummified priests and warlords. The deepest halls are utterly dark, lit only by the light of the words of creation that circle the faces of illumian mummies.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The characters can find all manner of adventures above and below Shom's sands. The tombs beneath Elirhondas and other fallen illumian cities hide great treasures guarded by dracoliches, mummies, desiccated zombies, skeletal tomb guardians, and the like. The astral giants' ongoing war against squatters in Shom (see *Revenge of the Giants*, page 16) is a source of constant action, and paragon or epic tier characters who can end the conflict might find themselves with the gratitude of both Erathis and Ioun.

In addition, for characters pursuing the appropriate epic destiny, Shom holds a special promise: godhood. Erathis's overall plan for Shom requires divinely powered vassals (exarchs) to swear fealty to her or Ioun. For characters who prove themselves, the deities offer the promise of great power.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Shom has all the normal environmental dangers of a desert. In addition, characters who venture into the white sands discover supernatural perils as well.

SHOM'S TWO DEITIES

Erathis and Ioun didn't stop Shom from sliding into ruin centuries ago. Now, they are cooperating to bring the dominion back. Does Ioun finally want a dominion of her own? Or are Erathis's efforts just a fragment of a greater prophecy Ioun will unravel? We won't answer this question definitively. Ioun's ways are mysterious.

DEADLY MIRAGE

The mirages of Shom's deserts sometimes take on an illusory physical form, and believing in them can be fatal. In an encounter where a deadly mirage is at play, add four illusory duplicate creatures, all of which have the normal statistics of the monsters in the encounter but only a single hit point (such that one hit slays a mirage; a missed attack never damages a mirage) and one-quarter of the normal XP. These illusory minions can make only basic attacks. They are especially deadly to those who have suffered in the desert: They gain a +2 bonus to attack rolls against a target that has lost at least one healing surge to Shom's environmental dangers.

GREAT STATUES

Any encounter near buried ruins might take place around one or more half-buried statues left over from illumians that wanted to immortalize their glory. Some are hundreds of feet tall and up to forty feet wide. Most of the statues are dead stone and metal, but a few still have a spark of power that affects all creatures within 3 squares. Empowered statues devoted to heroes of the syllable of the mind provide a +1 bonus to attack rolls with arcane, psionic, or psychic attacks. Empowered statues devoted to heroes of the syllable of the soul provide a +2 bonus to Fortitude and Will.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Characters adventuring in Shom are likely to encounter such solo threats as blue or red dragons scouring the surface for prey, burrowing purple worms drawn to tremors in the surface sand, and bands of creatures from Shom's lost empires or its current inhabitants, roaming the wastes. For a full encounter with astral giant warriors looking to stamp out a group of survivalist outsiders, see "Purifiers of Shom" on page 122.

Level 8 Encounter (XP 1,750)

- ◆ 1 flameskull (level 8 artillery, MM 109)
- ◆ 2 mummy guardians (level 8 brute, MM 192)
- ◆ 1 rot scarab swarm (level 8 soldier, MM 30)
- ◆ 1 trap haunt (level 8 lurker, MM 116)

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,500)

- ◆ 1 illumian mummy lord [mummy lord with words of creation; see sidebar] (level 13 elite controller, MM 192)
- ◆ 3 skeletal tomb guardians (level 10 brute, MM 235)
- ◆ 1 umber hulk (level 12 elite soldier, MM 256)

Level 18 Encounter (XP 11,000)

- ◆ 1 bone naga (level 16 elite controller, MM 194)
- ◆ 1 dire bulette (level 18 elite skirmisher, MM 38)
- ◆ 1 savage minotaur (level 16 brute, MM 191)
- ◆ 1 sphinx (level 16 elite soldier, MM 245)

ENCOUNTER: PURIFIERS OF SHOM

Encounter Level 18 (10,600 XP)

SETUP

- 1 astral giant blazing javelineer (J)
- 3 astral giant warpswords (W)
- 1 dire bulette (B)

A couple of bands of astral giants have reinterpreted Erathis's directive to sweep Shom clean of monsters that could interfere with colonists as an excuse to eliminate small pockets of outsiders that have beaten Erathis to the oases.

The characters, approaching from the southeast, come upon a pack of astral giants and their pet bulette attacking a group of outsiders. The giants are busy eliminating the colonists, so they might not notice the characters at first. If the giants are attacked or loudly challenged, they turn their attention to the characters.

When the characters come within sight of the oasis, read:

Before you a quartet of hulking brutes, three armed with blazing swords and one that hurls javelins, are mercilessly slaughtering a group of elves, humans, and halflings. Those who have survived the attack so far begin running toward you. A mound of earth rises from the center of the oasis.

3 Astral Giant Warpswords (W) Level 16 Skirmisher

Large immortal humanoid (giant)

XP 1,400 each

Initiative +15 Senses Perception +13

HP 158; Bloodied 79

AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 26, Will 26

Resist 10 radiant

Speed 8; see also *astral leap*

⊕ **Warpword** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Radiant, Weapon**

Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage, and ongoing 5 radiant damage (save ends).

⊕ **Dimensional Blow** (standard; recharge ☐☐☐☐) ♦ **Radiant, Teleportation, Weapon**

Reach 2; +21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 radiant damage, the target is teleported 5 squares, and the target is dazed until the end of its next turn.

Astral Retreat (immediate reaction when damaged by an attack; at-will) ♦ **Teleportation**

The astral giant teleports 2 squares.

Astral Resonance

As long as an astral giant has an unbloodied astral giant ally within 10 squares, it receives a +2 bonus to attack rolls.

Astral Leap (move; encounter; only within the Astral Sea; recharges when first bloodied)

The astral giant can fly up to 10 squares.

Alignment Unaligned Languages Giant, Supernal

Skills Athletics +20, Religion +16

Str 24 (+15) Dex 20 (+13) Wis 20 (+13)

Con 22 (+14) Int 16 (+11) Cha 17 (+11)

Equipment chainmail, greatsword

Dire Bulette (B)

Huge natural beast

Level 18 Elite Skirmisher

XP 4,000

Initiative +13 Senses Perception +13; darkvision, tremorsense 20

HP 360; Bloodied 180; see also *second wind*

AC 36; Fortitude 33, Reflex 29, Will 29

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8, burrow 8; see also *earth furrow*

Action Points 1

⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)

Before it bites, the dire bulette can make a standing long jump as a free action without provoking opportunity attacks; +23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 10 damage, or 4d8 + 10 damage if the target is prone.

⚡ **Rising Burst** (standard; at-will)

Close burst 2; the dire bulette sprays rock and dirt into the air when it rises out of the ground; +22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 10 damage.

⬇ **Earth Furrow** (move; at-will)

The dire bulette moves up to its burrow speed just below the surface of the ground, avoiding opportunity attacks as it passes underneath other creatures' squares. As it burrows beneath the space of a Large or smaller creature on the ground, the dire bulette makes an attack against the creature: +17 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target is knocked prone.

Ground Eruption

The squares into which a dire bulette surfaces and the squares it leaves when it burrows underground become difficult terrain.

Second Wind (standard; encounter) ♦ **Healing**

The dire bulette spends a healing surge and regains 90 hit points. The dire bulette gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned

Languages —

Skills Athletics +24, Endurance +23

Str 30 (+19)

Dex 15 (+11)

Wis 18 (+13)

Con 28 (+18)

Int 5 (+6)

Cha 12 (+10)

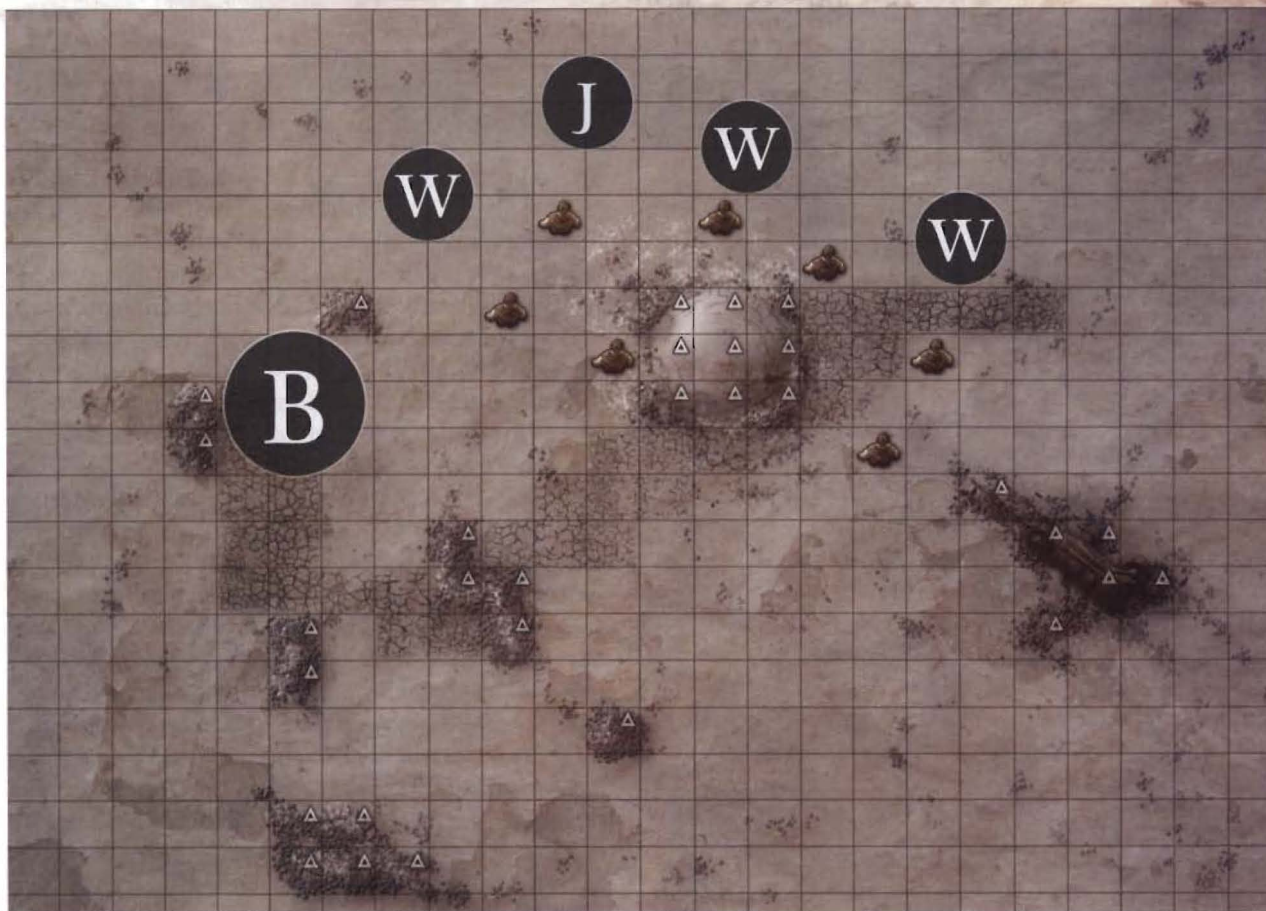
TACTICS

The giants attempt to lure the characters into a trap: the weakened ground above the bulette's impromptu burrow (see "Features of the Area"). While the javelineer starts throwing, the warpswords hang back and wait until the characters either close or begin using ranged attacks. They might try to goad the characters into charging by killing a few more of the frightened outsiders.

The dire bulette is belowground when the encounter starts. In the first round, it readies an action to charge the first character who moves within 5 squares of it. If no creatures approach before its action in the second round, it uses *earth furrow* to move through the middle of the group of characters, followed by *rising burst* as it emerges among the largest group of characters it can target.

If the characters rush into melee, the dire bulette attacks at its earliest opportunity, and the giants use *astral leap* to fly to advantageous positions around the characters.

If the characters begin with ranged attacks, the giants move toward them, seeking to enter combat as quickly as possible.



The warpswords hold off on using *dimensional blow* until they are near enough to set up multiple attacks on the same target by teleporting it around. Alternatively, they use *dimensional blow* to teleport the characters into the path of the dire bulette.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Frightened Outsiders: Squares marked with a humanoid symbol on the map represent the hapless survivors of the initial assault. In the first round after the characters are spotted, the outsiders flee (speed 6) from the giants, who take opportunity attacks against them when possible. The outsiders have AC 25 and 1 hit point each (a missed attack never damages an outsider). They cannot attack or take actions other than movement.

Difficult Terrain: The hemispherical mound at the center of the camp is the area the bulette occupied before it burrowed into the ground. This area is difficult terrain, as are the other places on the map marked with triangle symbols. The bulette creates additional difficult terrain when it surfaces or submerges.

Weakened Ground: Squares marked with a cobblestone pattern on the map represent a stretch of unstable ground left behind by the bulette's burrowing. Any creature that starts or ends its turn in one of these squares falls 10 feet into a tunnel beneath the surface, taking 2d10 damage from the fall and the impact of rocks that collapse into the tunnel. This tunnel requires a DC 24 Athletics check to climb out of, and only creatures that have a reach of 2 or more

can attack creatures within it (or vice versa). Creatures in the tunnel can move through it as they see fit.

Astral Giant		Level 19 Artillery (Leader)
Blazing Javelineer (J)		
Large immortal humanoid (giant)		XP 2,400
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +18	
HP 144; Bloodied 72		
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 28, Will 27		
Resist 10 radiant		
Speed 8; see also <i>astral leap</i>		
⚔ Javelin (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC, 1d8 + 4 damage + 2d8 radiant damage.		
⚡ Blazing Throw (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
Ranged 10/20; +26 vs. AC, 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target grants combat advantage and takes ongoing 5 radiant damage (save ends both).		
↻ Astral Winds (standard; encounter) ♦ Radiant		
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Reflex, 3d8 + 4 radiant damage, and the astral giant blazing javelineer pushes the target 3 squares.		
✦ Brilliant Lance (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Radiant		
Area burst 2 within 20; +22 vs. Reflex, 2d8 + 9 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the astral giant blazing javelineer's next turn.		
Astral Resonance		
As long as an astral giant has an unbloodied astral giant ally within 10 squares of it, it gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls.		
Astral Leap (move; only within the Astral Sea; recharges when first bloodied; encounter)		
The astral giant blazing javelineer flies 10 squares.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Giant, Supernal
Str 24 (+16)	Dex 22 (+15)	Wis 18 (+13)
Con 24 (+16)	Int 18 (+13)	Cha 20 (+14)
Equipment 5 javelins		

Nearly anything can be found in the Astral Sea, if someone travels far enough. You determine which varieties of “anything” make sense for your campaign. Use the following ideas as you like, or introduce them as rumors and turn the truth to your advantage.

ARCHANUS

Long ago, Archanus was a divine dominion ruled over by a deity sworn to creation and invention and filled with mechanical creatures roving every inch of a vast workshop.

During that time, a crafty saboteur introduced a proverbial monkey wrench into the works, creating a flaw in what was otherwise clockwork precision. The effects were subtle at first, and by the time the lords of the realm noticed, the chain reaction had spread so far as to be irreversible. The realm ground to a halt, strained, and then tore apart under the awesome forces of stuck gears and springs stretched to the limits. Within moments, the great machine realm was a ruin of broken gears and spilled fuel.

Though the clockwork dominion will never regain its former glory, its components remain to be harvested. A colony of maruts has moved into the ruin and seized some of the former mechanisms. The maruts have constructed a research station of sorts, devoted to building war machines and powerful weapons. The best and most useful components come from the various Dawn War battlefields and the unclaimed, shattered dominions—rarely do the maruts bother searching the functioning dominions, and thus they have so far eluded the notice of the deities, who might not take kindly to attempts to resurrect Dawn War devices.

The maruts are efficient in their processes but notably understaffed—they can spare only one or two search parties at a time, so they are interested in trading for curious and useful devices found by planar adventurers, and sometimes they employ bands of such adventurers to seek out new harvest sites or scavenge from tricky areas. The maruts pay for such resources with arms and armor they have created or with items of great magical power.

For all their successes, the maruts’ experiments have yielded as many failures as innovations. Powerful aberrant monsters often escape from the maruts’ control and wreak havoc in Archanus or beyond. Those creatures that escape do not have to fear pursuit; the maruts are less than enthusiastic about them, preferring instead to remain on station to continue their work and let others deal with the hazards they have unleashed.

ELDREGAARD

Few places in the planes truly show how far the mighty have fallen better than Eldregaard, also known as the Fane of the Fallen Dragon. The home of a once-powerful battle dragon, Eldregaard is a morose place inhabited by the miserable Isaldurax.

Once in the service of Bahamut, Isaldurax was a cunning leader who commanded the armies of the dragon god across the planes. At the apex of his career, Isaldurax was tasked with defending a temple in the Astral Sea against the infernal armies of Dispat. This temple—on the mote known as Eldregaard—was the haven for a mortal imbued with a fragment of Bahamut’s divine spark. When Dispat’s forces assaulted the temple, Isaldurax and those under his command easily drove them away. Isaldurax left Eldregaard to pursue Dispat’s forces, unaware that the initial attack was merely a cover for a covert mission to capture the mortal residing within the temple. Dispat’s agents were successful, and the mortal was taken back to the Nine Hells.

Stunned by his defeat, Isaldurax retreated inside Eldregaard, becoming a recluse. The shame of his failure made Isaldurax withdraw into himself, and the temple around him twisted to match his demeanor. In time, Eldregaard transformed into a dark, morose island whose only edifice is a gloomy structure that resembles a mausoleum more than temple. Those that remained by Isaldurax’s side were equally twisted by the dragon’s self-loathing, and in time they became nightmarish reflections of their former selves, living in eternal sorrow. It is said that all those who enter Eldregaard now become so overwhelmed with the woe of Isaldurax that they are trapped there forever, unwilling to return to the pain of life.

Yet there is much to draw curious travelers to Eldregaard. According to legend, when Isaldurax returned to the temple, he had all the wealth of Eldregaard collected and stored in large vaults under the temple. Some, particularly the faithful of Bahamut, believe that Isaldurax could be redeemed and restored to his former glory, although none who have tried have returned. A few even think that the fall of Isaldurax is a ruse by the dragon to protect the mortal imbued with Bahamut’s divine spark, who rests in stasis within Eldregaard. The tale they believe says that Isaldurax foresaw Dispat’s cunning and allowed the devil to kidnap a decoy, and that the transformation of Eldregaard is intended to convince Dispat that the temple has fallen into ruin.

THE FORGOTTEN SANCTUARY

When the deities defeated the primordials and sealed them away in prisons deep inside the Elemental Chaos, the world was protected from destruction. However, during the Dawn War, not every aspect of the deities' creation could be saved. Floating deep in the Astral Sea is a mote of earth and stone that, according to legend, was once part of a world otherwise destroyed by the primordials. This world might have been a forerunner to the world that the deities saved, or it might be from another time and place entirely. However, when this world was destroyed, the gods banded together to save as many of its inhabitants as possible. As a result, a massive fragment of the world was shunted to the Astral Sea at the time of the world's destruction, creating an island that preserves a long-forgotten civilization.

This island, referred to in Ioun's temples as the Forgotten Sanctuary, is an enormous landmass that is as big as a small continent in the mortal world. The process of shunting the world to the Astral Sea preserved its original ecosystem. More impressive is the fact that the original inhabitants of the mote, or rather their descendants, continue to populate the land to this day. Their civilization has grown slowly, but now cities, towns, and villages dot the mote as they would on any continent, and its people continue to live as they did before their world's destruction.

The Forgotten Sanctuary lies far from the current dominions, and is so out of the way that even gith-yanki pirates rarely venture there. According to the few visitors who have made the journey to the island, the inhabitants do not even know that they live on a mote in the Astral Sea. They believe that their world was plunged into eternal twilight during the ancient war, having no idea it was destroyed. A few powerful spellcasters from the Forgotten Sanctuary have discovered the truth about their "world," but they keep it a secret from the rest of the population to avoid the chaos the truth would cause.

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS AND THE FORGOTTEN SANCTUARY

The details about the world of the Forgotten Sanctuary have been left vague intentionally. In your campaign, the Forgotten Sanctuary can be a fragment of another campaign setting, either of your own design or from an official source, allowing the characters to visit another world while traveling across the Astral Sea. For example, if you are running a campaign set in your own world but want to use an adventure set in Eberron, you might set that adventure on the Forgotten Sanctuary and use the basic assumptions of the **EBERRON**® campaign setting to flesh out the details of the Forgotten Sanctuary.

VINCENT DUTRAIT

FROSTBURN

This pocket of elemental energy sprang up in the wake of the Dawn War and now floats through the Astral Sea, unattached to any other region. It is unlike other pockets because instead of being composed of all elements in a chaotic admixture, the elements of fire and cold hold dominance here. Motes of earth, water, and air exist, but they are tainted by either fire or cold (or both, if there is a battle raging there).

FROSTBURN TRAITS

Type: Elemental mote.

Size and Shape: Rough sphere 50 miles in diameter, bounded.

Gravity: Elemental buoyancy.

Mutability: Unstable (+5 to DCs to create terrain without fire or ice elements).

Fire and Cold Affinity: Cold or fire attack powers gain a +1 bonus to the attack roll, and acid, lightning, and thunder powers deal half damage (ongoing damage is not affected).



Visitors to Frostburn quickly become caught in the middle of a never-ending war between two great, opposite forces: hordes of fire archons and ice archons, eternally struggling for dominance in the astral mote that has trapped them. Due to the magic of the pocket, the warring forces have no idea how long their struggle has endured, thinking it only days.

Two elemental princesses—the cold and calculating Sisanthak and the hot-tempered Vorsheen—claim dominance over Frostburn, sending their seemingly limitless troops forth from their respective castles, Snow and Cinder, which float at opposite ends of the mote. Characters who arrive in Frostburn are quickly approached by one side or the other, demanding aid—and threatening violence if their request is not instantly granted.

The source of Frostburn is a jealously guarded central orb that radiates elemental power. The two factions—frost and fire—constantly war over this orb, with their princesses thinking that to own it is to rule the mote once and for all. Little do they realize that their constant struggle maintains the forces within the orb in opposition, preventing either side from defeating the other. If one side were victorious, the losing elemental force within the orb would perish, leaving the other dominant and free of its limitations. However, the victorious force would then burst its confines and consume Frostburn in a titanic flood of elemental energy.

The deities advise their servants to avoid this mote, though Erathis might support those with plans to destroy it, since such work will eventually be required to restore the Lattice of Heaven.

KAR'KA DUN

Kar'ka Dun is either one of the most significant sites in githyanki history or a puzzling artifact that has accumulated legends it does not deserve. Oracles say that this wide, flat plain covered in tall grass and twisted trees is the site of the githyanki's first landing in the Astral Sea, which is fitting since the island constantly moves through the astral realm.

The island has a black stone building at its center, which blends the function of a fort with the aesthetics of a cathedral. However, the architecture is all wrong. The fort is indefensible, with too-wide arrow slits and doors that cannot be shut. The figures carved into the black stones might be githyanki, or perhaps githzerai.

The far travelers (page 97) say that Gith decreed that Kar'ka Dun was the one place where githyanki and githzerai would have to meet in peace, if there should ever be a time when the races needed to meet again. You won't hear githyanki of Tu'narath repeating such legends, but you couldn't pay a githyanki captain enough to mount an attack on Kar'ka Dun.

MUTAS

Mutas is a free city inhabited by mortals. Its metal buildings ring the inside of a sunken structure that drops into the dim depths of the Astral Sea. This foundational structure resembles the inside of a drinking cup several miles in diameter.

Legend says that Mutas is the cup Moradin was holding when he learned that the Dawn War had begun. In disgust, he tossed it into the lattice between realms, where it stuck. Although neither Moradin nor his followers claim any tie to Mutas, the place still apparently enjoys the deity's protection. Devils, demons, githyanki, and other hostile forces are barred from entering in large numbers.

The various fiends prevented from entering Mutas maintain an ad hoc blockade outside the rim of the cup. The inhabitants of Mutas welcome news and goods from the outside world and pay adventurers well for help escaping through the blockade.

PLUTON, THE GRAY WASTE

Pluton was the divine dominion of the death god Nerull, the deity slain by the Raven Queen. She was unable, or unwilling, to take over Nerull's dominion, preferring to make her home in the Shadowfell. After absorbing Nerull's power, the Raven Queen cut Pluton entirely out of the soulform process. Other shattered dominions sometimes receive misplaced outsiders. Pluton does not. Its "native" inhabitants are ghosts and other leftover spirits from Nerull's reign. Pluton's distinguishing characteristic is that it still has an iron gray color veil, though Astral travelers curse the sight of it, since few choose to go to this realm. For more on Pluton, see *Manual of the Planes*, page 111.

SHIVERING SPIRES

The Shivering Spires is a ten-mile-square pocket composed of elemental wind and air that derives its name from the high, incredibly thin pillars rising from a pool of acid and fire far below. These spires, placed at random distances from one another, are known to bend and shift as the winds rage about them, tipping toward one another to allow passage between pillars and swaying apart at unforeseen moments. Falling from the spires represents a real hazard, because the drop ends in a churning lake of fire and acid (5d10 falling damage, and 20 acid and fire damage per round of submersion), and the chance of finding another, shorter route is not certain (as decided by you, or a 40% chance of success).

Only flying elemental creatures such as fire bats, gargoyles, and elementals dwell here with any frequency, and a few dragons scour the skies for a tasty meal. The Shivering Spires is also known throughout the Astral Sea as a neutral dueling ground, principally for magicians who have a sense of drama.

THE TRIAD ISLANDS

A trio of motes floating near one another, the Triad Islands are three nations stuck in a cycle of conflict and exhausted truce. The islands are divided by small expanses of open space in the Astral Sea and are spaced just far enough apart that they can be seen from the other islands, but not close enough for travelers to swim from one to another comfortably. Although these islands are small enough to escape the notice of most astral travelers, they have a long and bloody history that rivals the tales of many nations in the world.

Each of the three islands is a sovereign nation. Morisia is a military state ruled by a council descended from a mortal army that escaped to the Astral Sea eons ago during one of the mortal world's great wars of empire. Algomon is controlled by a theocracy loyal to Kord. Its people's ancestors were warriors who traveled to the Astral Sea seeking the aid of their deity; after the expedition was thrown off course and stranded on Algomon, they were forced to build a new civilization. Cyrenax was once a part of Tytherion. A great cataclysm severed Cyrenax from the rest of that dominion, hurtling it into the Astral Sea. Over time, these three motes drifted close enough to be caught in each other's planar gravity, forming a group of islands that has found equilibrium at their current distance from one another.

Ever since the islands converged, their inhabitants have been fighting with one another. Cyrenaxi cultists have left their obsidian fortresses on the mountains of their island to raid the opulent, sprawling cities of Morisia. Morisian general-lords, incensed that the people of Algomon refused to come to their aid, launched their own frontal assaults on the scattered temple-villages of Algomon, forcefully taking the goods that they claim the Algomani refuse to provide. The Algomani, in turn, sail to Cyrenaxi to attempt to topple the cultists' fortresses, hoping to stall any future conflicts before they start. This endless cycle of attacks and counterattacks continued for centuries until Morisian General-Lord Golgrim, a dwarf of considerable skill in war, called a conclave of the leaders of the three islands and a monumental peace treaty was signed. Though the peace continues, its strength is that of a single thread, since it would take only one reckless act to plunge the three back into war.



MOTES IN THE ASTRAL SEA

3

ZULKOLOSZ

The small island of Zulkolosz is a redoubt and safe haven for githyanki pirates and other scoundrels of the Astral Sea. A githyanki settlement is built deep inside the island, accessible through tunnels large enough to accommodate astral ships. Githyanki ships sail directly into the bay of this underground haven, which resembles a city of the Underdark with buildings set into the sides of the cave walls. The center of Zulkolosz is a deep chasm that contains a direct portal to the Abyss in the Elemental Chaos, which is a feature that endears it to githyanki who want to raid the githzerai.

Zulkolosz vacillates between maintaining a githyanki-only policy and allowing nongithyanki pirates to moor. At the moment, anyone can use the moorage as long as they pay the hefty fee. In the past, such phases of openness have presaged confrontations with dominion ships or other powerful enemies during which the githyanki have used the pirates of other races as sacrificial cover for their own quick escape. For now, Zulkolosz is a neutral ground where members of various evil factions and races trade information, slaves, and roundhouse kicks.

ASTRAL DENIZENS

ADVENTURERS DEFINE themselves in large measure by the dangers they overcome. The wide range of creatures described in this chapter offers fresh challenges for adventurers willing to risk danger on the forgotten battlefields of the Dawn War, beyond the color veils of dark dominions, and in remote outposts upon the treacherous Astral Sea.

Abominations seeded by the primordials stalk the periphery of the home of the gods. Many of the worst of these creatures, such as the marut servitors designed by the gods during the Dawn War, have evolved from their original forms.

Whether they are githyanki brandishing their silver swords, or the merciless quom searching for motes of Lakal, quick-sailing raiders lie in wait upon the Astral Sea, ready to strike unwary travelers.

The Nine Hells are filled with devils of many kinds. Some are covert operatives, public emissaries, or simple scavengers looking for new souls. Regardless of their individual agendas, many devils inhabit the wider Astral Sea, looking to promote Asmodeus's plans.

The divine dominions and their surrounding areas can also contain hazards for those traveling in the Plane Above. These dangers can come from the obvious, such the rival factions of the dominion of war (representing Bane and Gruumsh), or from the less expected, such as exalted of Erathis and Kord traveling outside their realm.



RALPH HORSLEY



ABOMINATION

THE MAJORITY OF ABOMINATIONS ARE LIVING WEAPONS created during the Dawn War by either the gods or the primordials. At least one other abomination has been created recently by the strange energy of the isle of Agathys in Carceri.

ASTRAL RENDER

AN ASTRAL RENDER'S AMORPHOUS NATURE circumvents planar boundaries, allowing it to use dimensional instability as a weapon.

Astral render



Astral Render Level 27 Controller
Large immortal magical beast (blind, ooze) XP 11,000

Initiative +21 **Senses** Perception +18; blindsight 20, tremorsense 10

HP 253; **Bloodied** 126

AC 41; **Fortitude** 40, **Reflex** 39, **Will** 39

Immune gaze, can't be teleported against its will; **Resist** see also planar warp

Speed fly 8 (hover; altitude limit 3); see also planar warp

① **Touch of Distortion** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psionic, Radiant, Teleportation**

+31 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 9 psionic and radiant damage, and the astral render teleports the target 5 squares.

② **Distorting Ray** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psionic, Radiant, Teleportation**

Ranged 10; +31 vs. Reflex; 3d8 + 9 psionic and radiant damage, the astral render teleports the target 5 squares, and the target is dazed (save ends).

✱ **Reality Rift** (standard; recharge [1]) ♦ **Teleportation, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 20; + 31 vs. Reflex; 4d8 + 9 damage, and the astral render teleports the target 10 squares to a space outside the burst. In addition, the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both). **Effect:** The burst creates a zone of altered reality that lasts until the end of the encounter. Any creature that enters the zone is subject to the following secondary attack. **Secondary Attack:** +31 vs. Will; the target teleports 10 squares to a space outside the zone, and is dazed and slowed (save ends both).

Planar Warp (move; recharges when the astral render uses reality rift) ♦ **Teleportation**

The astral render teleports 12 squares and gains insubstantial and phasing until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Supernal
Str 27 (+21) **Dex** 26 (+21) **Wis** 21 (+18)
Con 29 (+22) **Int** 9 (+12) **Cha** 26 (+21)

ASTRAL RENDER TACTICS

An astral render uses a combination of *planar warp* and *reality rift* immediately, unless its foes are too spread out. It continues to use this combination against the most dangerous foe, even if it can't target other enemies or if its allies are caught in the burst. While waiting for *reality rift* to recharge, it alternates between *touch of distortion* and *distorting ray* depending on circumstances, and uses *planar warp* alone only if it needs to avoid being penned in.

ASTRAL RENDER LORE

Religion DC 17: Astral renders are among the earliest immortal abominations created by the gods. The gods harnessed the energy of the Astral Sea and turned it inward on itself to create them.

Religion DC 26: Astral renders can rip holes between worlds, harming, disorienting, and transporting foes, or teleporting themselves by way of planar rifts.

HUNDRED-HANDED ONE

HUNDRED-HANDED ONES ARE IMMENSE WAR MACHINES unleashed by the gods to tear across the cosmos like walls of slashing swords, shredding everything in their paths.

HUNDRED-HANDED ONE TACTICS

A hundred-handed one takes advantage of its speed and reach to get into the center of the battle, where its *avalanche of blades* aura can do the most damage. It uses its *hundred hands* attack each round, reserving *hail of steel* for opponents that effectively employ ranged weapons.

Hundred-Handed One		Level 29 Elite Soldier
Huge immortal animate (construct)		XP 30,000
Initiative +23	Senses Perception +14; darkvision	
Avalanche of Blades aura 3; each creature that enters the aura or starts its turn there takes 10 damage.		
HP 540; Bloodied 270		
AC 47; Fortitude 46, Reflex 42, Will 43		
Immune charm, fear; Resist 5 to all damage		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 8; see also earth reaver		
Action Points 1		
⚔ Whirling Blades (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 3; +36 vs. AC; 4d8 + 4 damage.		
⚔ Hundred Hands (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 3; targets each enemy within reach; +36 vs. AC; 4d6 + 8 damage, and the target is knocked prone. <i>Special:</i> When charging, the hundred-handed one can use this power in place of a melee basic attack.		
⚔ Hail of Steel (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Weapon		
Area burst 1 within 20; +34 vs. AC; 4d6 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the hundred-handed one's next turn.		
Blades of Death (when the hundred-handed one hits a creature with an opportunity attack)		
The target is dazed until the end of the hundred-handed one's next turn.		
Earth Reaver		
A hundred-handed one ignores difficult terrain.		
Indiscriminate Carnage		
A hundred-handed one can score a critical hit against a prone creature on a roll of 17-20.		
Alignment Evil	Languages —	
Str 33 (+25)	Dex 25 (+21)	Wis 11 (+14)
Con 30 (+24)	Int 4 (+11)	Cha 27 (+22)
Equipment 100 longswords		

Malediction		Level 23 Controller
Large elemental magical beast (undead)		5,100 XP
Initiative +20	Senses Perception +15, darkvision	
Grave Storm (Lightning, Necrotic, Thunder) aura 3; when an enemy within the aura spends a healing surge, it takes 20 lightning, necrotic, and thunder damage.		
HP 153; Bloodied 76		
AC 35; Fortitude 34, Reflex 35, Will 33		
Immune disease, fear, poison; Resist 15 lightning, 15 necrotic, 15 thunder, insubstantial		
Speed 8, fly 8 (hover)		
⚔ Maddening Touch (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to Will until the end of the malediction's next turn.		
⚡ Necrostorm Ray (standard; encounter) ♦ Fear, Lightning, Thunder		
Ranged 10; +26 vs. Will; 3d8 + 5 lightning and thunder damage, and the target is slowed and grants combat advantage (save ends both).		
⚡ Keening Madness (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Fear, Psychic		
Close burst 5; +28 vs. Will; 3d8 + 10 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Primordial, understands all languages
Str 24 (+18)	Dex 29 (+20)	Wis 18 (+15)
Con 27 (+19)	Int 18 (+15)	Cha 20 (+16)

MALEDICTION TACTICS

A malediction confronted with living beings of noticeable intelligence opens with *keening madness*, then rushes forward to drain its victim's mind with *maddening touch*. It has little mind for subtlety and attacks without heed of danger or preamble.

MALEDICTION LORE

Arcana DC 24: Maledictions attack by sapping the will of their foes—those who survive an attack are often left hopelessly mad and physically desiccated.

Arcana DC 29: The primordials originally created maledictions in the Dawn War by mixing the mental agonies of gods felled by psychic assault with elemental fury. It is said that Orcus prizes these creatures and uses them as the spearhead of powerful assaults on his foes in the Astral Sea.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Maledictions leave death and insanity in their wake. They are sometimes shadowed by other undead creatures that take advantage of their will-sapping powers or that consume their crazed leavings.

Level 23 Encounter (XP 29,975)

- ♦ 1 malediction (level 23 controller)
- ♦ 1 larva mage (level 21 elite artillery, MM 175)
- ♦ 5 abyssal ghoul myrmidons (level 23 minion, MM 119)
- ♦ 1 dread wraith (level 25 lurker, MM 267)

HUNDRED-HANDED ONE LORE

Religion DC 28: Although dim-witted and almost incapable of speech, hundred-handed ones exhibit surprising willfulness and pride. These traits, combined with their appetite for wanton carnage, ultimately made them unreliable servants for the deities, especially when plans to drop them into in the Elemental Chaos and forget about them went awry.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Wherever a hundred-handed one goes, violence and death follow, which often attracts planar scavengers.

Level 27 Encounter (XP 63,000)

- ♦ 1 hundred-handed one (level 29 elite soldier)
- ♦ 3 shadowraven swarms (level 27 brute, MM 243)

MALEDICTION

GRAFTED FROM THUNDER, WIND, AND THE MADNESS of dead gods, maledictions rove the Astral Sea searching for intelligent life to feed upon. Screaming in fury and agony, they are heedless of danger in combat and are drawn to the most intelligent foes, whose minds they find delectable.

Nullifier



NULLIFIER

THESE TERRIBLE ABOMINATIONS are a fusion of maruts and the warped astral energy of Agathys. Created when a group of marut mercenaries broke through Agathys's defenses and merged with the energy of that place, these former inmates of the Red Prison are the result of those escapees discovering ways to replicate themselves.

Half -Void Nullifier	Level 24 Soldier (Leader)
Large immortal humanoid	XP 6,050
Initiative +20	Senses Perception +16, truesight 10
Void Feedback aura 5; when an enemy within the aura hits the half-void nullifier, as a free action, one ally within the aura can make a saving throw or gain 5 temporary hit points (the ally's choice).	
HP 228; Bloodied 114	
AC 40; Fortitude 38, Reflex 35, Will 35	
Immune sleep; Resist 10 thunder; Vulnerable if a half-void nullifier takes at least 30 radiant damage from a single attack, its aura ends until the nullifier reactivates it.	
Speed 8, fly 4 (hover), teleport 4	
⑦ Void Fist (standard; at-will) ♦ Teleportation	
Reach 2; +31 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage, and an ally within 5 squares of the half-void nullifier can teleport to any square adjacent to the target as a free action.	
⚡ Half-Cosmic Rip (standard; recharge [1][1]) ♦ Psychic, Teleportation	
Close burst 3; +29 vs. Will; 3d10 + 10 psychic damage, and the half-void nullifier teleports the target 5 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial, Supernal
Str 22 (+18)	Dex 23 (+18) Wis 18 (+16)
Con 28 (+21)	Int 16 (+15) Cha 23 (+18)

Void Nexus Nullifier	Level 25 Brute (Leader)
Large immortal humanoid	XP 7,000
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +15, truesight 10
HP 282; Bloodied 141	
AC 37; Fortitude 37, Reflex 36, Will 36	
Immune sleep; Resist 10 thunder	
Speed 8, fly 4 (hover), teleport 4	
④ Disheartening Fist (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and any creature within 3 squares of the void nexus nullifier has its temporary hit points reduced to 0.	
④ Flaring Fist (standard; at-will) ♦ Varies	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and any enemy within 3 squares of the void nexus nullifier that is taking ongoing damage takes that damage.	
④ Nexus Fist (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and all effects that a save can end on creatures within 3 squares of the void nexus nullifier end.	
† Hasty Fist (standard; recharge [1][1])	
Reach 2; +28 vs. AC; 4d10 + 10 damage, and the void nexus nullifier shifts 2 squares and makes a melee basic attack.	
Dispelling Presence (when the void nexus nullifier enters a zone)	
If the zone was created by a creature of the void nexus nullifier's level or lower, that zone ends.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Primordial, Supernal
Str 30 (+22)	Dex 24 (+19) Wis 16 (+15)
Con 22 (+18)	Int 14 (+14) Cha 25 (+19)

NULLIFIER TACTICS

A half-void nullifier foils its enemies' assaults by teleporting allies to the front with *void fist*, and then by scattering its foes with *half-cosmic rip*.

A void nexus nullifier fights simply, but with tactical finesse, choosing just the right attack for the target and the combat state of its allies. It will quickly use *dispelling presence* if an enemy throws up a zone.

NULLIFIER LORE

Religion DC 17: The maruts were the first to refer to these new abominations as nullifiers. It is not known what the nullifiers call themselves; they tend not to communicate with other creatures that are not abominations.

Religion DC 26: Though nullifiers are new to the ranks of abominations, they often lead groups containing other abominations. It's rumored that nullifiers make compacts that bind these groups together, but no one knows how such agreements might be couched, and nullifiers want nothing to do with any other type of contractual obligation.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Nullifiers are most often encountered in groups of their own kind or as leaders of mixed groups of elemental and immortal abominations.

Level 25 Encounter (XP 35,350)

- ♦ 3 half-void nullifiers (level 24 controller)
- ♦ 1 void nexus nullifier (level 25 brute)
- ♦ 2 blood fiends (level 23 soldier, MM 12)



Malediction and voracia

VORACIA

DRIPPING POISON FROM A DOZEN FANGS, a voracia is a primordial beast that was created to be the foe of fey and the fey gods. Voracias move by rolling their five starfishlike limbs into a ball and hurling themselves forward, despoiling and devouring all in their path and leaving a trail of putrid slime in their wake.

Voracia		Level 22 Elite Skirmisher
Large elemental magical beast		XP 8,300
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +16	
Acid Haze (Acid) aura 3; each enemy that enters the aura or starts its turn there takes 10 acid damage, or 20 acid damage while the voracia is bloodied.		
HP 416; Bloodied 208		
AC 36; Fortitude 34, Reflex 34, Will 30		
Resist 20 acid, 20 poison		
Saving Throws +2		
Speed 7 (10 while bloodied), climb 6		
Action Points 1		
⊕ Envenomed Fangs (standard; at-will) ♦ Poison		
Reach 2; targets one or two creatures; +27 vs. AC; 2d8 + 12 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). If the target is bloodied by this attack, the target is also dazed until the end of its next turn.		
⊗ Acidic Spittle (standard; at-will) ♦ Acid		
Ranged 10; +25 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 12 acid damage, and ongoing 15 acid damage (save ends).		
† Ravenous Rend (standard; at-will)		
The voracia makes two <i>envenomed fangs</i> attacks and shifts 3 squares.		
Astral Doom		
Enemies cannot reroll attacks against a voracia.		
Stepper's Bane (immediate reaction, when an enemy uses a teleportation power inside the voracia's <i>acid haze</i> aura; at-will)		
♦ Poison		
The voracia teleports 10 squares and makes a melee basic attack. If it hits the triggering enemy with this attack, the target also takes ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Elven
Str 26 (+19)	Dex 26 (+19)	Wis 20 (+16)
Con 24 (+18)	Int 18 (+15)	Cha 20 (+16)

VORACIA TACTICS

A voracia attacks fey creatures before any others. It begins with *envenomed fangs*, and uses *ravenous rend* to move into the middle of its enemies whenever possible. A voracia uses *stepper's bane* to pin down eladrin and other teleporting creatures. Even if a target manages to avoid its *envenomed fangs*, the voracia uses *acidic spittle* to continue its assault.

VORACIA LORE

Arcana DC 16: Created to combat Corellon and Sehanine, voracias are the particular foe of fey, seeking fey flesh above all others. They plague elven planar lands, including Arvandor and the Feywild.

Arcana DC 24: Voracias do not attack drow on sight, and sometimes fight alongside them in battle. Some rumors suggest that Lolth had a hand in the beasts' creation.

Arcana DC 29: Though originally created by the primordials, voracias are still being created. The terrible magic that produces new abominations seems to have selected them as perfect candidates for Arvandor's Hunting Lands.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Voracias can be easily followed by the trail of acid they leave behind. They are sometimes kept as particularly destructive pets by sworn foes of the fey.

Level 22 Encounter (XP 23,600)

- ♦ 1 voracia (level 22 elite skirmisher)
- ♦ 2 blood fiends (level 23 soldier, MM 12)
- ♦ 1 earthwind ravager (level 23 controller, MM 104)

BANESWORN

OF ALL THE GODS OF THE PLANE ABOVE, none can boast an army as vast, as disciplined, or as deadly as that of the Iron General.

From the ranks of his exalted, as well as the other souls that linger in the lands beyond Chernoggar, Bane molds perfect soldiers, transforming those who were already among the best into something even deadlier.

This section offers a sampling of the warriors, priests, and living weapons that serve at the whim of the Iron General. They can appear either among the humans of the mortal realm, or leading forces of exalted and other souls throughout Chernoggar and the Astral Sea.

BANESWORN WARRIOR

BANESWORN WARRIORS USE THEIR SUPERIOR tactical knowledge to pin down their enemies, allowing their allies to overwhelm and destroy those foes.

Banesworn Warrior		Level 13 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 800
Initiative +11	Senses Perception +9	
HP 133; Bloodied 66		
AC 29; Fortitude 26, Reflex 24, Will 24		
Speed 5		
⚔ Spear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage. <i>Effect:</i> The target is marked until the end of the Banesworn warrior's next turn.		
🏹 Shortbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 15/30; +20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage. <i>Effect:</i> The target is marked until the end of the Banesworn warrior's next turn.		
Spearmaster's Stand (minor; requires a spear; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Weapon		
The Banesworn warrior gains threatening reach, allowing it to make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares). This effect ends when the Banesworn warrior moves.		
Brutal Intercept (immediate reaction, when a Banesworn warrior hits with an opportunity attack; at-will)		
The target is knocked prone.		
Chosen Foe		
Any target marked by a Banesworn warrior also grants combat advantage to it.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Athletics +17, Religion +12		
Str 22 (+12)	Dex 16 (+9)	Wis 17 (+9)
Con 21 (+11)	Int 12 (+7)	Cha 14 (+8)
Equipment scale armor, shortbow, 20 arrows, spear		

BANESWORN WARRIOR TACTICS

These soldiers often fight in ranks or otherwise take full advantage of their reach. A Banesworn warrior positions itself in a spot where its enemies are likely to try to move past it and then uses *spearmaster's stand* to make opportunity attacks. Then it attempts to knock foes prone with *brutal intercept*, effectively ruining whatever course of action provoked the opportunity attack.



Juggernaut of the Black Hand

BANESWORN WAR PRIEST

BANESWORN WAR PRIESTS PUT TERRIBLE CURSES ON their foes before joining their fellows in the slaughter.

Banesworn War Priest		Level 14 Controller (Leader)	
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 1,000	
Initiative +10		Senses Perception +13	
HP 141; Bloodied 70			
AC 28; Fortitude 27, Reflex 25, Will 27			
Speed 5			
⚔ Mace (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon			
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage.			
🏹 Lance of Fear (standard; at-will) ♦ Implement, Necrotic, Radiant			
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 6 necrotic and radiant damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).			
⚔ Imperator's Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Fear, Weapon			
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone.			
☠️ Curse of Doom (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Implement, Fear			
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 radiant damage. <i>Effect:</i> The target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses until the end of its next turn.			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Religion +17			
Str 16 (+10)		Dex 17 (+10)	
Wis 23 (+13)			
Con 21 (+12)		Int 20 (+12)	
Cha 20 (+12)			
Equipment plate armor, mace, holy symbol of Bane			

BANESWORN WAR PRIEST TACTICS

A Banesworn war priest uses *curse of doom* as soon as a few foes are grouped appropriately, and as often as possible afterward. It uses ranged attacks until its curse recharges, engaging in melee only if forced to do so.

JUGGERNAUT OF THE BLACK HAND

THESE FEARLESS WARRIORS are the heavy hitters of Bane's forces, leaving slaughter in their wake.

Juggernaut of the Black Hand		Level 18 Brute
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 2,000
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +14	
HP 174; Bloodied 87		
AC 30; Fortitude 29, Reflex 28, Will 28		
Immune fear; Resist see also terrible slaughter		
Saving Throws +2 against effects that immobilize, restrain, or slow		
Speed 7		
⚔ Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+21 vs. AC; 3d10 + 7 damage.		
⚔ Barreling Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+21 vs. AC; 3d10 + 7 damage, and the juggernaut pushes the target 5 squares.		
⚔ Banesworn Wrath (standard; recharges when bloodied) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 1; +19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 damage (save ends).		
Terrible Slaughter		
While not bloodied, a juggernaut gains a +4 bonus to damage rolls and resist 5 to all damage.		
Unstoppable Charge		
When a juggernaut makes a charge attack, it rolls twice and uses the higher of the two results.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Athletics +21, Intimidate +20, Religion +16		
Str 25 (+16)	Dex 22 (+15)	Wis 21 (+14)
Con 22 (+15)	Int 15 (+11)	Cha 22 (+15)
Equipment scale armor, greatsword		

JUGGERNAUT TACTICS

A juggernaut of the Black Hand charges in combat using *unstoppable charge*. It then attacks with *barreling strike*, hoping to push its target back so that it can charge again. It will take attacks of opportunity from one enemy in order to charge another.

BANESWORN IRON BULWARK

KNOWN FOR THEIR ABILITY to stand up to vicious attacks, Banesworn iron bulwarks are the wall that Banesworn warriors drive their enemies into.

IRON BULWARK TACTICS

A Banesworn iron bulwark tries to position itself where it can make the greatest number of opportunity attacks to best use *impassable bulwark* and *brutal intercept*. It prefers to use *Bane's retribution* against a ranged attacker that targets more than one of its allies.

Banesworn Iron Bulwark		Level 19 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 2,400
Initiative +16	Senses Perception +15	
Ubiquitous Threat aura 2; each enemy that starts its turn within the aura is marked by the Banesworn iron bulwark until the start of the enemy's next turn.		
HP 184; Bloodied 92		
AC 34; Fortitude 32, Reflex 30, Will 31		
Immune fear		
Speed 5		
⚔ Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.		
⚔ Shield Shove (minor; requires a shield; at-will)		
Targets a creature marked by the Banesworn iron bulwark; +24 vs. Fortitude; the iron bulwark pushes the target 1 square and shifts into the space the target left. On a critical hit, the target is also knocked prone.		
⚔ Bane's Retribution (immediate reaction, when a creature marked by the Banesworn iron bulwark makes an attack that does not include the iron bulwark; recharge ☒ ☐)		
Close burst 10; targets the triggering creature; +24 vs. Fortitude; the target takes 10 damage for each creature it targeted with the triggering attack.		
Brutal Intercept (immediate reaction, when the Banesworn iron bulwark hits with an opportunity attack; at-will)		
The target is knocked prone.		
Impassable Bulwark		
When a Banesworn iron bulwark makes an opportunity attack, it rolls twice and uses the higher of the two results.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Goblin	
Skills Athletics +21, Intimidate +18, Religion +18		
Str 25 (+16)	Dex 20 (+14)	Wis 22 (+15)
Con 24 (+16)	Int 18 (+13)	Cha 18 (+13)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, longsword		

BANESWORN LORE

Religion DC 13: Many of Bane's exalted, as well as souls that do not quite achieve that status but still find themselves drawn to Chernoggar's conflict, are swept up into Bane's armies. It's said that mortal warriors who distinguish themselves in conflicts alongside the Banesworn can become promoted to the ranks of the Banesworn.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Banesworn almost always fight in groups, alongside other combatants loyal to the Iron General.

Level 14 Encounter (XP 5,000)

- ♦ 1 Banesworn war priest (level 14 controller)
- ♦ 2 Banesworn warriors (level 13 soldier)
- ♦ 3 nightmares (level 13 skirmisher, MM 196)

Level 18 Encounter (XP 10,800)

- ♦ 2 Banesworn iron bulwarks (level 19 soldier)
- ♦ 1 barbed devil (level 18 skirmisher, *Manual of the Planes* 124)
- ♦ 1 cambion hellfire magus (level 18 artillery, MM 39)
- ♦ 1 juggernaut of the Black Hand (level 18 brute)

The terrors of the Nine Hells are as vast as the number of sins committed in the mortal world. And while many of Asmodeus's fallen are confined to the task of keeping that grim grinder of souls churning, others go forward to collect corrupted mortal souls—the currency of their dominion.

BURNING DEVIL

A GAUNT, WITHERED CREATURE lit eternally aflame, a burning devil seeks nothing more than to share its torment with others. No matter the color of a burning devil's flame, which consumes the residual life energy of the damned, each flame represents the devil's hate for the living.

Burning Devil		Level 4 Minion Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 44
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +3; darkvision	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 18; Fortitude 16, Reflex 18, Will 15		
Resist 10 fire		
Speed 7		
⚔ Burning Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire		
+9 vs. AC; 5 fire damage.		
⚡ Fire Burst (when the burning devil drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Fire		
Close burst 2; no attack roll; 5 fire damage.		
Fiery Alacrity (free, when the burning devil is missed by a fire attack) ♦ Teleportation		
The burning devil teleports 7 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Supernal	
Str 12 (+3)	Dex 14 (+4)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 10 (+2)	Cha 10 (+2)

Burning devil



WHITEFIRE BURNING DEVIL

Whitefire burning devils are covered with radiant flames, which remind them of their former lives.

Whitefire Burning Devil		Level 14 Minion Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 250
Initiative +15 Senses Perception +10; darkvision		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 24		
Resist 15 fire, 20 radiant		
Speed 7		
④ Burning Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
+19 vs. AC; 9 radiant damage.		
⚡ Whiteflame Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant		
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 9 radiant damage.		
⚡ Whitefire Burst (when the whitefire burning devil drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Radiant		
Close burst 2; no attack roll; the target takes ongoing 9 radiant damage (save ends).		
Brilliant Alacrity (free, when the whitefire burning devil is missed by a fire or radiant attack) ♦ Radiant, Teleportation		
The whitefire burning devil teleports 7 squares. At the end of the movement, the burning devil makes a <i>whiteflame bolt</i> attack against the creature that made the triggering attack.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Supernal
Str 16 (+10)	Dex 22 (+13)	Wis 16 (+10)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 10 (+7)	Cha 10 (+7)

BLACKFIRE BURNING DEVIL

Blackfire burning devils burn with necrotic flames that reflect the dark nature of their souls.

Blackfire Burning Devil		Level 24 Minion Skirmisher
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 1,513
Initiative +22 Senses Perception +17; darkvision		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 39; Fortitude 36, Reflex 38, Will 34		
Resist 20 fire, 20 necrotic		
Speed 8		
④ Burning Claw (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic		
+29 vs. AC; 13 necrotic damage.		
⑦ Blackflame Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic		
Ranged 10; +27 vs. Reflex; 13 necrotic damage.		
⚡ Blackfire Burst (when the blackfire burning devil drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Necrotic		
Close burst 2; no attack roll; the target takes ongoing 10 necrotic damage and is weakened (save ends both).		
Deadly Alacrity (free, when a blackfire burning devil is missed with a fire or necrotic attack) ♦ Necrotic, Teleportation		
The blackfire burning devil teleports 8 squares. At the end of the movement, the burning devil makes a <i>blackflame bolt</i> attack against the creature that made the triggering attack.		
Alignment Evil		Languages Supernal
Str 21 (+17)	Dex 27 (+20)	Wis 21 (+17)
Con 25 (+19)	Int 10 (+12)	Cha 10 (+12)



Indwelling devil

BURNING DEVIL TACTICS

A burning devil fights best with others of its kind by taking advantage of the teleportation provided by its *deadly alacrity* when the *fire burst* abilities of its burning devil allies trigger.

BURNING DEVIL LORE

Religion DC 18: Burning devils are usually the first devils seen by those traveling to the Hells, because they latch onto ships passing through that dominion's color veil and inflict as much damage as they can before the ship crashes into Avernus.

Religion DC 23: Particularly tormented mortals become either whitefire burning devils or blackfire burning devils, lit aflame for all eternity. Whitefire devils are a torment saved for corrupt priests and hypocrites, while blackfire devils are former necromancers and mass murderers.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Hordes of burning devils are often used as shock troops by more powerful devils or the Hells' other occupants. Left uncontrolled, burning devils roam heedlessly and scour everything in sight.

Level 6 Encounter (XP 1,276)

- ◆ 1 tiefling heretic (level 6 artillery, MM 250)
- ◆ 2 magma claws (level 4 brute, MM 182)
- ◆ 2 spined devils (level 6 skirmisher, MM 66)
- ◆ 4 burning devils (level 4 minion skirmisher)

Level 15 Encounter (XP 6,500)

- ◆ 1 night hag (level 14 lurker, MM 151)
- ◆ 1 bone naga (level 16 elite controller, MM 194)
- ◆ 2 bearded devils (level 13 soldier, MM 60)
- ◆ 6 whitefire burning devils (level 14 minion skirmisher)

Level 24 Encounter (XP 32,178)

- ◆ 1 pit fiend (level 26 elite soldier, MM 65)
- ◆ 1 storm devil (level 23 artillery, *Manual of the Planes* 127)
- ◆ 6 blackfire burning devils (level 24 minion skirmisher)

INDWELLING DEVIL

TWISTED, DARK SPIRITS THAT SCOUR unsuspecting souls, indwelling devils are the unseen puppet masters of the Nine Hells. They know all and see all, making excellent spies. Their true mission is to hunt down souls that escape from the Hells.

Indwelling Devil	Level 18 Lurker
Small immortal humanoid (devil)	XP 2,000
Initiative +17	Senses Perception +18, darkvision
HP 90; Bloodied 45	
AC 30; Fortitude 25, Reflex 28, Will 28	
Resist 20 fire	
Speed 6, fly 6	
⚔ Devil's Caress (standard; at-will) ◆ Necrotic	
+21 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 10 necrotic damage, and the target is dazed until the end of the indwelling devil's next turn and grabbed.	
† Devil's Thrall (standard; usable only against a target dazed and grabbed by the indwelling devil; at-will) ◆ Charm	
+21 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).	
† Indwelling (minor; usable only against a target dominated and grabbed by the indwelling devil; recharge ☞ ☞)	
+21 vs. Will; the indwelling devil merges with the target, sharing its space and controlling its actions. The merged creature is stunned until the merge ends. On the indwelling devil's turn, it uses its actions to control the merged creature. It can choose only actions normally available to the target, and can use only the target's at-will powers. A successful grab attack against the indwelling devil ends the merge. When the merge ends, the attacker slides the indwelling devil to a square adjacent to the creature it was merged with, and the indwelling devil is dazed (save ends).	
Invisibility (minor; at-will) ◆ Illusion	
The indwelling devil becomes invisible until the end of its next turn, or, if it is merged with a creature, it becomes invisible until the merge ends. The indwelling devil can end the invisibility as a free action.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Supernal
Skills Bluff +19, Diplomacy +19	
Str 16 (+12)	Dex 18 (+13) Wis 18 (+13)
Con 15 (+11)	Int 20 (+14) Cha 20 (+14)

INDWELLING DEVIL TACTICS

An indwelling devil uses *invisibility* most of the time, preferring to avoid notice so that it can ready an action and use *devil's thrall* on a foe engaged in combat

that it has dazed, followed immediately by *indwelling*. If successful, the indwelling devil dominates its enemy and uses that foe to fight his or her unknowing companions. If expelled from a host, an indwelling devil becomes dazed and visible, putting it in a bad position. Unless it saves immediately against the daze and has recharged its *indwelling* ability, an indwelling devil will flee rather than risk destruction.

INDWELLING DEVIL LORE

History DC 13: A well-known story tells of a city-state in the recent past that elected a dictator to protect it from a hobgoblin horde. After the threat was thwarted, the dictator refused to relinquish power and ruled the city tyrannically. The city's savior came in an unusual form. An oracle of Ioun entered the city and demanded an audience with the dictator. Once the audience was granted, the seemingly meek oracle arrogantly accused the dictator of being a soul escaped from the Nine Hells. A pitched battle ensued, during which the oracle was revealed as a thrall of an indwelling devil. The devil defeated the dictator and dragged his escaped soul back to the Hells. To this day, the city has maintained a small shrine to the Hells and the indwelling devil that liberated their city.

Religion DC 25: The services of indwelling devils are in high demand among the dukes, barons, and lords of the Hells. Some believe that all indwelling devils secretly serve a single lord, or are part of a secret society pursuing its own esoteric agenda, but those goals or the supposed lord vary depending on who is speaking on the subject. The most common claim is that the indwelling devils serve Phongor the Inquisitor, and thus Asmodeus himself.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

An indwelling devil is most often encountered among a band of creatures it's secretly controlling. Its enemies often think that they've vanquished a small band of dazed-looking creatures only to discover to their peril that the indwelling devil controlling those foes has found a new host among them.

Level 18 Encounter (XP 10,000)

- ◆ 1 indwelling devil (level 18 lurker)
- ◆ 1 cambion hellfire magus (level 18 artillery, MM 39)
- ◆ 1 bralani of autumn winds (level 19 controller, MM 101)
- ◆ 1 cyclops battleweaver (level 17 skirmisher, MM 48)
- ◆ 1 medusa shroud of zehir (level 18 skirmisher, MM 187)

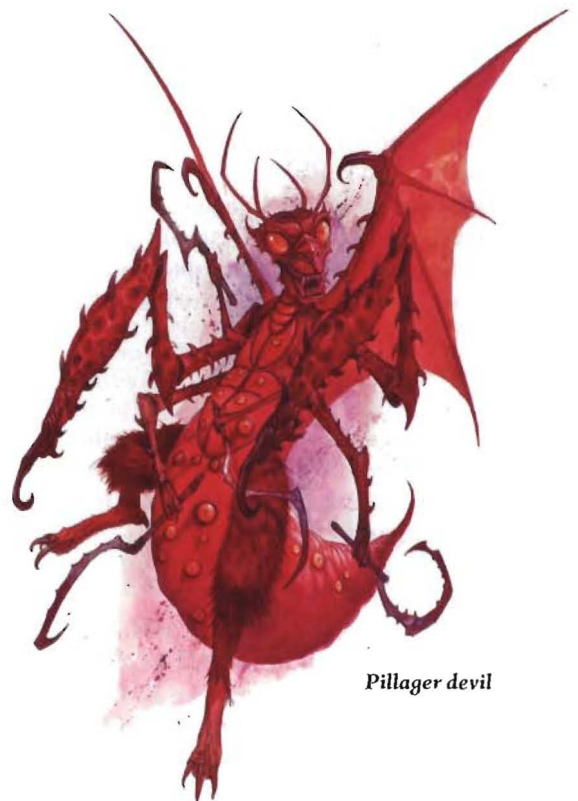
PILLAGER DEVIL

A BLOATED INSECTOID DEVIL bristling with spines and drooling blood, the pillager devil roams the Astral Sea, claiming souls for the Nine Hells.

Pillager Devil	Level 25 Soldier
Huge immortal magical beast (devil)	XP 7,000
Initiative +18	Senses Perception +18, darkvision
HP 232; Bloodied 116	
AC 41; Fortitude 39, Reflex 35, Will 37	
Resist 30 fire	
Speed 7, fly 9 (clumsy)	
Ⓡ Rake (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; +32 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.	
⚡ Frenzied Rake (standard; at-will)	
Reach 2; the pillager devil makes three attacks, targeting two or three enemies; +29 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.	
⚡ Soul Grasp (standard; at-will) ⚡ Psychic	
Reach 2; +30 vs. Will; 2d10 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is grabbed. While grabbing a creature, the pillager devil can move normally, and if the pillager devil is affected by forced movement, it can take the grabbed creature with it. <i>Sustain Minor:</i> The pillager devil sustains the grab, and the target takes 2d10 + 10 psychic damage.	
⚡ Soul's Calling (minor; recharge ⓂⓂ)	
Close blast 3; targets creatures other than devils; +28 vs. Will; the pillager devil pulls the target 2 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Supernal
Skills Intimidate +21	
Str 25 (+19)	Dex 18 (+16) Wis 23 (+18)
Con 24 (+19)	Int 16 (+15) Cha 18 (+16)

PILLAGER DEVIL TACTICS

A pillager devil speeds into combat, attacking first with its *rake* or *frenzied rake* before grabbing its first victim with *soul grasp*. It keeps potential victims close with *soul's calling*.



Pillager devil

PILLAGER DEVIL LORE

Religion DC 26: Pillager devils specialize in claiming the wayward damned in the Outer Torments or claiming the souls of travelers in the Astral Sea. Many are given a quota by their masters of souls gathered, and they aren't picky about how to reach it.

Religion DC 31: Other devils consider pillager devils to be lesser beings, uncouth and malformed. It's considered punishment to have to serve with pillager devils on their hunt for souls.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Pillager devils work together in pods of two or three, or team up with other devils that are compelled to aid them by their shared infernal master. Nondevils are understandably averse to their company.

Level 24 Encounter (XP 33,100)

- ♦ 3 pillager devils (level 25 brute)
- ♦ 2 assassin devils (level 24 lurker, *Monster Manual* 2 64)

WARDER DEVIL

GRACED WITH BEAUTIFUL FORMS stolen from warrior princes and battle maidens, warder devils carve a bloody line of defense for their hellish masters.

Warder Devil		Level 16 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid (devil)		XP 1,400
Initiative +16	Senses Perception +8, darkvision	
HP 154; Bloodied 77		
AC 32; Fortitude 32, Reflex 28, Will 26		
Resist 20 fire		
Speed 6		
⚔ Burning Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Weapon +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 11 fire damage, and the target is marked until the end of the encounter or until the warder devil uses <i>burning greatsword</i> against a different target.		
↻ Whirlwind Ravage (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire, Weapon Close burst 1; +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 11 fire damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage (save ends). If the target is marked by the warder devil, it instead takes ongoing 15 fire damage (save ends).		
Hell's Step (immediate interrupt; when an enemy marked by the warder devil hits an ally; at-will) ♦ Teleportation The warder devil teleports 10 squares to a space adjacent to the triggering enemy and makes a <i>burning greatsword</i> attack against that creature.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Supernal	
Skills Intimidate +17		
Str 22 (+14)	Dex 18 (+12)	Wis 11 (+8)
Con 18 (+12)	Int 14 (+10)	Cha 19 (+12)
Equipment greatsword		

WARDER DEVIL TACTICS

A warder devil is charged with protecting a particular devil—whether an official ambassador or a petty tyrant—and gladly sacrifices its life for its master. It keeps its charge from being attacked as much as possible, halting foes in place with its *burning greatsword*



Warder devil

mark while dealing fiery doom with *whirlwind ravage*. A warder devil seeks out bloodied foes in preference to any other, slaking its lust to slay.

WARDER DEVIL LORE

Religion DC 20: Originally used as escorts for Asmodeus's fiendish emissaries traveling between dominions, warder devils have been retasked as bodyguards by several powerful devils in the Nine Hells. Many serve Dispatser.

Religion DC 25: The first warder devils were once angels of protection, whose sadistic thirst for blood and destruction led them to side with Asmodeus in his rebellion.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Warder devils are usually encountered as escorts to greater devils, either as bodyguards or concubines (or both). They enjoy taking orders as much as they like inflicting suffering and pain.

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,100)

- ♦ 1 bone devil (level 17 controller, MM 92)
- ♦ 1 sword wraith (level 17 lurker, MM 267)
- ♦ 2 warder devils (level 16 soldier)
- ♦ 6 legion devil veterans (level 16 minion, MM 64)

EXALTED OF ERATHIS

ERATHIS'S EXALTED FREQUENTLY VENTURE into the Daybreak Islands and the wider Astral Sea on missions for their god to further the Game of Making, as well as Erathis's plans to restore and recolonize the shattered dominions.

Origin: The creature's origin becomes immortal.

Skill Modifications: +2 bonus to History checks; +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks or Intimidate checks.

ATTACK POWERS

As the god of civilization, Erathis emphasizes teamwork and cooperation. As a god of creation, Erathis gifts her exalted with a deeper understanding of the nature of magic items. The following theme powers can be added to any of Erathis's exalted.

ADVANCING THE GUARD

Advancing the Guard (standard; encounter)

The exalted shifts 1 square and makes a basic attack. If the attack hits, each ally adjacent to the exalted's original or current space can shift 1 square and make a basic attack.

Best Roles: Leader, soldier.

General Advice: This power provides any group of exalted with a surge that can carry them over and through their enemies.

Great Combo: Adding this power to the deva knight-errant (*Monster Manual 2*, page 62) helps turn that defensive leader into an offensive threat.

HARMONY OF TOOLS

Harmony of Tools (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 5 squares of the exalted uses a magic item power; recharge 1)

The exalted makes a basic attack against the triggering enemy.

Best Roles: Artillery, controller.

General Advice: This power is best for exalted creatures that have basic ranged attacks. Giving this power to more than two creatures in an encounter, however, can be overly punishing to the characters.

Great Combo: A human mage (*Monster Manual*, page 163) that has *harmony of tools* replies to an attempt by an enemy to use a magic item power with a *magic missile*.

UNYIELDING PROGRESS

Unyielding Progress (standard; at-will)

The exalted makes a charge attack. In addition, it can't be pulled, pushed, slid, or teleported against its will until the end of its next turn.

Best Roles: Brute, soldier.

General Advice: As an incarnation of Erathis's push to bring civilization permanently to every

corner of the universe, this power creates assaults that don't yield ground easily.

Great Combo: Human nobles (*Monster Manual 2*, page 148) and a group of human guards (*Monster Manual*, page 162) that have this power can create a line that does not budge on the first strike against it, but is incredibly mobile later in the fight.

UTILITY POWERS

Erathis's martial skills are mainly defensive. Her exalted excel at holding on when they should break.

AN ARMY TOGETHER

An Army Together (minor; encounter)

Until the end of the exalted's next turn, the exalted and each ally adjacent to it gains a +2 bonus to all defenses and a +5 bonus to saving throws.

Best Roles: Artillery, soldier.

General Advice: This power is best for creatures that fight in melee alongside many allies, or that operate as a group of artillery monsters. It also turns the weakness of minions—being killed in groups because of clumping together—into a potential strength.

Great Combo: A group of dragonborn blood-reavers (*Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons*, page 215) using *an army together* can turn a flowing mobile attack into a strong defense.

HOLD THIS GROUND

Hold This Ground (immediate interrupt, when an enemy makes a charge attack against the exalted or one of its allies; encounter)

The triggering enemy takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll, and a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

Best Roles: Soldier.

General Advice: Use this power to emphasize the defensive skills of Erathis's exalted. Simply running up to them and swinging isn't a sufficiently sophisticated plan.

Great Combo: A dragonborn warmaster (*Draconomicon: Chromatic Dragons*, page 216) that has *hold this ground* is certain to make rash enemies pay.

HEROIC SACRIFICE

Heroic Sacrifice (immediate interrupt, when an ally within 10 squares of the exalted misses with an attack; encounter)

The ally can reroll the attack, but if it does, it grants combat advantage until the end of the exalted's next turn.

Best Roles: Artillery, controller.

General Advice: An exalted uses this power in an attempt to pull victory out of defeat, especially when that success is particularly crucial.

Great Combo: Just about any second-rank controller or artillery is happy to have this power. But a frontline leader or soldier can also use it to aid his artillery support.

EXALTED OF KORD

KORD'S EXALTED OFTEN TRAVEL OUT OF CELESTIA in small groups, carousing and hunting in the Foothills or looking for trouble near Bane's outposts.

Origin: The creature's origin becomes immortal.

Skill Modifications: +2 bonus to Athletics checks or Intimidate checks.

ATTACK POWERS

Few of Kord's exalted choose subtlety over force. The attack powers available to them emphasize Kord's role as god of storm and god of strength. The following theme powers can be added to any of Kord's exalted.

STORM'S SHOCK

Storm's Shock (free, when the exalted hits with a melee weapon attack; encounter) ♦ **Lightning, Thunder, Weapon**

The weapon attack deals lightning and thunder damage, and ignores temporary hit points.

Best Roles: Brute, lurker.

General Advice: Kord's followers exult in matching their enemies' strength with strength and winning. Use this power with a creature that is already expected to deal lots of damage.

Great Combo: Recast the juggernaut of the Black Hand (page 135) as an exalted of Kord instead of Bane, replace its radiant and necrotic damage with lightning and thunder damage, and add *storm's shock* to it to put the fear of the storm into the characters.

STORM GOD'S JUDGMENT

Storm God's Judgment (standard; recharge [1])

The exalted makes a basic attack. If the attack hits, the target gains vulnerable 5 lightning per tier and vulnerable 5 thunder per tier (save ends both).

Best Roles: Artillery, controller.

General Advice: This power works only if it's paired with lightning or thunder attacks, or teamed up with creatures that have those attacks.

Great Combo: Use a human diabolist (*Monster Manual 2*, page 144), but recast its fire powers as lightning and thunder powers to take advantage of *storm god's judgment*.

STORM OF BLOWS

Storm of Blows (standard; encounter) ♦ **Weapon**

The exalted makes a melee basic weapon attack against each enemy within reach. On a hit, if the attack roll is odd, the target is pushed 2 squares, and if the attack roll is even, the target is knocked prone.

Best Roles: Brute.

General Advice: This power captures the unpredictable consequences of Kord's fury.

Great Combo: With *storm of blows* on its side, just about any brute becomes better, and a soldier gains a big bang attack that might surprise its foes.

UTILITY POWERS

The utility powers of Kord's exalted either provide appropriate defenses or ensure that combat concludes quickly.

STORMBLESSED

Stormblessed

The exalted gains resist 5 cold per tier, resist 5 lightning per tier, and resist 5 thunder per tier.

Best Roles: Any.

General Advice: This power works best with creatures that expect to be inside the area of effect of attacks that do not distinguish between allies and enemies.

Great Combo: Human lackeys (*MM*, page 162) stand more chance of surviving on a paragon tier battlefield when they have the *stormblessed* power.

UNYIELDING STRENGTH

Unyielding Strength (immediate interrupt, when this creature drops to 0 hit points; encounter) ♦ **Healing**

The exalted makes a basic attack. If the attack hits, the creature doesn't drop to 0 hit points and instead regains 10 hit points per tier.

Best Roles: Brute.

General Advice: This power is best used on creatures that die easily. Use it as a compensation for a champion that hits hard but has poor defenses, not as a further defense for a creature that is already hard to kill.

Great Combo: A genasi fireblade (*Monster Manual 2*, page 116) that has *unyielding strength* can supply one last jolt of ongoing fire damage before it falls.

WAR IS FOR THE STRONG

War Is for the Strong (minor; recharge [1])

Until the end of the exalted's next turn, the exalted and any ally within 3 squares of it gain a +2 bonus to melee attack rolls and take a -2 penalty to AC.

Best Roles: Any.

General Advice: This power can be given to multiple creatures in the same encounter. The bonuses and penalties they provide don't stack, but a different creature can use the *war is for the strong* war cry each turn.

Great Combo: Multiple deva zealots (*Monster Manual 2*, page 62) that have *war is for the strong* can use their *path of virtue* to make multiple attacks in a single turn, while punishing those who attack in return by using *radiant retribution*.

GITHYANKI

THE GITHYANKI ARE PIRATES AND SOLDIERS that fight a never-ending war against mind flayers and other aberrations. As consummate pirates, they also raid, pillage, and plunder the various settlements scattered throughout the Astral Sea, striking fear into all who see them on the horizon.

CH'R'AI INQUISITORS

THE CH'R'AI ARE A GROUP OF dangerous githyanki that are loyal only to Vlaakith and seek out anyone that might prove disloyal to the lich-queen. Relentless in their pursuit of dissidents, the ch'r'ai target other githyanki, making them less than popular among the rest of their people. Still, the ch'r'ai care little for the honor of their people, for they have been elevated to their rank by Vlaakith herself. Ch'r'ai inquisitors lurk in doorways, down dark alleys, and in other shadowy places, always on the lookout for signs of disloyalty. Should they find any, their inquisition is swift and almost always deadly. They are masters of the mind and can bend even the most strong-willed githyanki to their whims, forcing their victims to tell the truth even against their own wishes. It is whispered in the streets of Tu'narath that no secret can be hidden from a ch'r'ai inquisitor, and that all is revealed during questioning—before the questioned is given over for execution.

Ch'r'ai Inquisitor	Level 15 Lurker
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,200
Initiative +17	Senses Perception +15
HP 114; Bloodied 57	
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 27	
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects	
Speed 6	
⚔ Silver Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
+20 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage plus 1d6 psychic damage.	
† Inquisitor's Strike (standard action; usable only against a target not affected by inquisitor's strike; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+18 vs. Will; 1d8 + 4 damage plus 1d6 psychic damage, and the target is dominated until the end of the ch'r'ai inquisitor's next turn.	
Bend the Will (free action, when the ch'r'ai inquisitor is hit with a melee or ranged attack while dominating a creature; at-will)	
The creature dominated by the ch'r'ai inquisitor uses an at-will attack power of the ch'r'ai inquisitor's choice against the enemy making the triggering attack as a free action.	
Keep Enemies Close	
A ch'r'ai inquisitor gains a +4 bonus to all defenses while a creature it's dominating is within 5 squares of it.	
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)	
The ch'r'ai inquisitor or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic
Skills Arcana +14, Insight +15	
Str 16 (+10)	Dex 23 (+13) Wis 16 (+10)
Con 18 (+11)	Int 14 (+9) Cha 20 (+12)
Equipment leather armor, silver longsword	

CH'R'AI INQUISITOR TACTICS

A ch'r'ai inquisitor likes to turn its enemies against one another. It uses *inquisitor's strike* to change an enemy into its pawn, and then moves into a position where it can attack another enemy. On the dominated creature's turn, the inquisitor commands it to move adjacent to the enemy the inquisitor is attacking. In the following round, the inquisitor makes a *silver longsword* attack against the nondominated enemy, and then uses *bend the will* to have the dominated creature deliver a second punishing attack.

DUTHKA'GITH

A TWISTED HYBRID OF GITHYANKI AND RED DRAGON created by Vlaakith on Tu'narath, the duthka'gith are powerful new warriors in the lich-queen's army. Over the eons since the original Vlaakith urged Gith to accept the pact with Tiamat, the queens of the githyanki have learned much about the red dragons. Vlaakith CLVII put this knowledge to use, infusing githyanki warriors with red dragon blood in dark rituals designed to create more deadly warriors. The results of these rituals have exceeded Vlaakith's expectations, and though the duthka'gith are limited



Duthka'gith

in number (and mostly restricted to Tu'narath), their effectiveness has already been seen in repeated assaults on githyanki dissidents. The duthka'gith are reviled and feared by many githyanki, who believe them to be a sign of things to come for the githyanki people as a whole.

Duthka'gith		Level 19 Brute
Medium magical humanoid		XP 2,400
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +12; darkvision	
HP 222; Bloodied 111		
AC 31; Fortitude 31, Reflex 30, Will 29		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+22 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage plus 1d10 psychic damage, and the duthka'gith slides the target 1 square.		
⚔ Battering Barrage (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Weapon		
+20 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 6 damage, the duthka'gith pushes the target 3 squares, and the target is immobilized until the end of the duthka'gith's next turn.		
⚔ Buckle the Knees (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+20 vs. Fortitude; 1d10 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the duthka'gith's next turn.		
⚔ Breath Weapon (standard; recharge ⏏) ♦ Fire		
Close blast 5; +18 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 5 fire damage. Miss: Half damage.		
Bloodied Breath (free, when first bloodied; encounter)		
Breath weapon recharges, and the duthka'gith uses it.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The duthka'gith or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +14, Intimidate +20		
Str 25 (+16)	Dex 20 (+14)	Wis 16 (+12)
Con 22 (+15)	Int 11 (+9)	Cha 22 (+15)
Equipment scale armor, silver greatsword		

DUTHKA'GITH TACTICS

Most duthka'giths are stronger than other githyanki and use this strength to their advantage. During combat, a duthka'gith uses *battering barrage* and *buckle the knees* to maneuver enemies into small groups and pin them there, at which point it unleashes its *breath weapon* on the group.

GITHYANKI FAR WANDERER

THE FREE-ROAMING FAR WANDERERS ARE GITHYANKI that would not give up the freedom of a nomadic existence and continue to sail the Astral Sea. With nowhere to call a home port, the far wanderers travel from one location to the next, pillaging and looting in order to sustain themselves. Perhaps no group is more fitting of the iconic pirate moniker applied to all githyanki, since the far wanderers know no home other than their ships and constantly prey upon the weak to maintain their lifestyle.

Though still technically loyal to the lich-queen, the githyanki far wanderers are less concerned with the matters of the githyanki as a whole and more interested in what and where their next target will be. The far wanderers put great stock in their freedom and have embraced the idea of their liberation as a race ever since they threw off the chains of the mind flayers. Slavery, even when it involves nongithyanki, is anathema to the far wanderers, and they will do anything to retain their freedom. When captured or imprisoned, they rail against their captors day and night, and they will make escape attempts that seem suicidal if they have even the slimmest chance of winning their freedom.

Githyanki Far Wanderer		Level 13 Skirmisher
Medium natural humanoid		XP 800
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +8	
HP 131; Bloodied 65		
AC 27; Fortitude 25, Reflex 26, Will 25		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Rapier (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage.		
⚔ Positioning Lunge (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+18 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage, and the githyanki far wanderer shifts 2 squares.		
⚔ Silver Step (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Teleportation		
The githyanki far wanderer makes three <i>silver rapier</i> attacks, each against a different target. The githyanki far wanderer can teleport 5 squares before each attack.		
⚔ Liberating Strike (immediate reaction, when the githyanki far wanderer is grabbed, immobilized, or restrained; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Targets the creature that grabbed, restrained, or immobilized the githyanki far wanderer; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the githyanki far wanderer ends the grabbed, immobilized, or restrained condition and shifts 3 squares.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The githyanki far wanderer or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +13, Nature +13		
Str 14 (+8)	Dex 22 (+12)	Wis 14 (+8)
Con 19 (+10)	Int 13 (+7)	Cha 19 (+10)
Equipment leather armor, silver rapier		

GITHYANKI FAR WANDERER TACTICS

A far wanderer is all about mobility; it prefers to use *positioning lunge* to move around the battlefield quickly, saving *silver step* for an opportunity when it can attack three enemies.

GITHYANKI BLACKWEAVE

WICKED AND DEPRAVED WITH SOULS AS DARK AS pitch, githyanki blackweaves are warlocks who have dedicated themselves to Vlaakith, the lich-queen. To become a blackweave, a githyanki gives over part of its life essence to the lich-queen, sustaining her in undeath for a while. In exchange, Vlaakith bestows the ability to channel some of her dark power, giving githyanki blackweaves capabilities beyond those of other githyanki warriors. This transfer of power grants the blackweaves the ability to corrupt the bodies of their enemies, making those foes easier to slay in the name of the lich-queen. Perhaps more significant, those slain by the githyanki blackweaves do not pass into the Shadowfell as is normal; instead, their souls pass to Tu'narath, where they are claimed by the lich-queen to sustain her undead existence.

Githyanki Blackweave Level 14 Controller
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,000

Initiative +9 Senses Perception +8

HP 136; Bloodied 68

AC 28; Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 27

Saving Throws +2 against charm effects

Speed 6

① **Silver Rapier** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Psionic, Weapon**
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 2 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage.

② **Eldritch Blast** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Implement**
+18 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the githyanki blackweave's next turn.

⚡ **Wracking Blast** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Implement, Psychic**
Close blast 3; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and until the end of the githyanki blackweave's next turn, whenever the target damages the githyanki blackweave, the target takes 2d6 psychic damage.

⚡ **Psychic Sinkhole** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Implement, Psychic, Zone**
Area burst 1 within 10; +16 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone of energy that lasts until the end of the githyanki blackweave's next turn. Any creature that starts its turn within the zone loses its move action during that turn.

Pact of the Lich-Queen (free action, when the githyanki blackweave damages a bloodied enemy; encounter)
The triggering enemy loses a healing surge and cannot spend healing surges (save ends).

Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)
The githyanki blackweave or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech

Skills Arcana +17, Religion +17

Str 11 (+7) **Dex** 14 (+9) **Wis** 13 (+8)

Con 16 (+10) **Int** 20 (+12) **Cha** 23 (+13)

Equipment leather armor, silver rapier, rod



Githyanki blackweave

GITHYANKI BLACKWEAVE TACTICS

A githyanki blackweave attempts not only to kill its enemies, but to trap them nearby so that their souls might be sent to the lich-queen. The blackweave uses *psychic sinkhole* to slow enemies, preferring to finish them off with *silver rapier* or *eldritch blast*. If enemies get too close, the blackweave uses *wracking blast* before moving to a safer position.

GITHYANKI GHUSTIL

GITHYANKI GHUSTILS ARE THE CLOSEST that the githyanki come to having a priest caste. These warriors dedicated to Vlaakith have learned to channel nascent bits of divine power, snatched while drifting in the Astral Sea or stolen from those who channel divine power regularly. The ghustils are not widely trusted by other githyanki, mostly due to their association with the power of the gods. Still, Vlaakith has given her approval to the ghustils, and so they travel with githyanki raiding parties and incursion forces, acting as her eyes and ears. Like the blackweaves, the ghustils have the ability to channel power directly from the lich-queen, which they in turn use to bolster the efforts of other githyanki. Many githyanki tolerate the presence of the ghustils simply because they know that the ghustils have (and can

confer) the favor of Vlaakith. However, if the ghustils were to fall out of favor, few of them would survive without the lich-queen's protection.

Githyanki Ghustil		Level 14 Lurker (Leader)
Medium natural humanoid		XP 1,000
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +13	
HP 108; Bloodied 54		
AC 28; Fortitude 25, Reflex 26, Will 27		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 3 damage plus 1d6 psychic damage.		
⚔ Necrotic Smite (standard; usable only while affected by <i>cloak of shadows</i> ; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Radiant, Weapon		
+19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage plus 1d8 necrotic damage plus 1d8 radiant damage.		
Capture Divinity (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 10 squares of the githyanki ghustil uses a divine power; encounter)		
♦ Healing		
The githyanki ghustil regains 27 hit points.		
Cloak of Shadows (standard; at-will)		
The githyanki ghustil gains total concealment against all enemies until the end of its next turn.		
Gift of Vlaakith (minor; recharge ☐ ☐)		
One githyanki ally within 10 squares of the githyanki ghustil gains 15 temporary hit points.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The githyanki ghustil or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +15, Religion +15		
Str 13 (+8)	Dex 19 (+11)	Wis 23 (+13)
Con 18 (+11)	Int 16 (+10)	Cha 14 (+9)
Equipment cloth armor, silver longsword		

GITHYANKI GHUSTIL TACTICS

A ghustil begins combat by using *cloak of shadows* to avoid attacks and to set up its positioning for a strike. In the following round, it unleashes *necrotic smite* on a single target, continuing this cycle until its foes are dead. Additionally, a ghustil uses *gift of Vlaakith* to give temporary hit points to allies in danger.

GITHYANKI PYROCLAST

MASTERS OF TELEKINETIC POWER that can conjure flames with the power of their minds, githyanki pyroclasts revel in consuming their enemies with summoned fire. Sometimes referred to as holocaust warriors due to their penchant for burning their enemies to a crisp, pyroclasts turn their enemies' minds against themselves, making it more difficult for those foes to avoid the pyroclasts' deadly flames. Those that have faced githyanki pyroclasts claim that they can create hot, intense flames that sear holes in flesh in the blink of an eye. Githyanki pyroclasts believe that their minds are the true weapons that will purge the cosmos of their enemies, including the dwellers in the dark that once enslaved them. Few enemies survive the mind flames of githyanki pyroclasts once in their grip.

Githyanki Pyroclast		Level 17 Controller
Medium natural humanoid		XP 1,600
Initiative +9	Senses Perception +11	
HP 161; Bloodied 80		
AC 31; Fortitude 27, Reflex 29, Will 28		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+22 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage.		
⚔ Psychic Flames (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Psychic		
+21 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 fire damage plus 1d10 psychic damage.		
☞ Searing Ray (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Fire, Psychic		
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +21 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 5 fire damage, and the target's healing surge value is halved (save ends).		
☞ Fire of the Mind (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Psychic		
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; +19 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 3 fire damage, and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The githyanki pyroclast or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Skills Arcana +18		
Str 11 (+8)	Dex 12 (+9)	Wis 16 (+11)
Con 17 (+11)	Int 21 (+13)	Cha 19 (+12)
Equipment cloth armor, silver longsword		

GITHYANKI PYROCLAST TACTICS

A githyanki pyroclast's main tactic is to use *fire of the mind* on as many of its enemies as it can. When it has several enemies wrapped in flames, the pyroclast then uses *psychic flames* to further reduce the most injured enemy. A pyroclast also prefers to use *searing ray* early in the fight, ensuring that its enemies that are burned do not easily recover.

GITHYANKI SWORD STALKER

THE SILVER SWORD IS A SACRED ITEM to the githyanki. Some silver swords contain fragments of astral detritus, giving them the power to banish aberrations from existence. If a silver sword falls into the hands of a nongithyanki, a small but elite cadre of githyanki knights known as the sword stalkers is tasked with recovering the weapon. Sword stalkers are trained to cross the Astral Sea, travel to other planes, and even delve into the dens of their hated mind flayer enemies to recover a lost sword. For a sword stalker, recovering a silver sword is more than just a matter of pride—it's about retrieving one of the most precious weapons in the githyanki arsenal that will be used in the final battles of the Eternal Crusade—battles that many githyanki believe will take place in the Far Realm itself.

Githyanki Sword Stalker		Level 17 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid		XP 1,600
Initiative +14		Senses Perception +13
HP 160; Bloodied 80		
AC 33; Fortitude 30, Reflex 28, Will 29		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Fullblade (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+24 vs. AC; 1d12 + 6 damage plus 1d6 psychic damage (crit 2d12 + 24 damage). Effect: The target is marked until the end of the githyanki sword stalker's next turn.		
† Disarming Reclamation (standard; recharge ⏏ ⚔) ♦ Weapon		
+22 vs. AC; 2d12 + 3 damage (crit 2d12 + 27 damage), and the target drops any weapon it's holding.		
† Unavoidable Swordsmanship (immediate interrupt, when an enemy adjacent to the sword stalker that is marked by it makes a melee attack that does not include the sword stalker; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+24 vs. AC; 2d12 + 3 damage (crit 2d12 + 27 damage), and the triggering attack instead targets the githyanki sword stalker. The githyanki sword stalker gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex against this attack.		
↩ Vortex of Silver Blades (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 1; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 2d12 + 15 damage), and until the end of the githyanki sword stalker's next turn, the target is marked and slowed by it.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The githyanki sword stalker or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Skills Stealth +17		
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 19 (+12)	Wis 20 (+13)
Con 16 (+11)	Int 10 (+8)	Cha 11 (+8)
Equipment plate armor, silver fullblade		

GITHYANKI SWORD STALKER TACTICS

Githyanki sword stalkers are trained to deal with enemies foolish enough to wield silver swords against them. As such, they are expert duelists and always try to use *unavoidable swordsmanship* to engage a weapon-wielding foe head-on. Once this tactic is successful, the sword stalker uses *disarming reclamation* to force its foe to drop its weapon, which can then be retrieved.

GUL'OTHRAN MARAUDER

GUL'OTHRAN MARAUDERS ARE A SECT OF GITHYANKI who have devoted their lives to the Eternal Crusade, a never-ending struggle to wipe out the mind flayers across all planes, including the Far Realm. Most of the githyanki encountered in significant numbers outside the Astral Sea are members of the gul'othran. Living only to eradicate the illithid threat, they prefer to take their fight to the mind flayers rather than waiting for an attack to come to them.

Gul'othran marauders are responsible for countless incursions into various realms. These incursions are merely part of the larger war against the mind flayers and their ilk.

Gul'othran Marauder		Level 16 Brute
Medium natural humanoid, githyanki		XP 1,400
Initiative +11		Senses Perception +12
HP 190; Bloodied 95		
AC 28; Fortitude 29, Reflex 26, Will 27		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage plus 1d10 psychic damage.		
† Break-Through Strike (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+17 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 4 damage, and the gul'othran marauder pushes the target 3 squares.		
↩ Driving Storm (standard; recharge ⏏ ⚔) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 1; targets enemies; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 7 damage, and the gul'othran marauder pushes the target 3 squares.		
Slave Taker (free, when the gul'othran marauder bloodies an enemy; encounter)		
The triggering enemy is dominated (save ends). The target takes a -5 penalty to saving throws against this effect if it's within 5 squares of the gul'othran marauder.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The gul'othran marauder or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Skills Nature +17		
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 16 (+11)	Wis 18 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 14 (+10)	Cha 12 (+9)
Equipment plate armor, silver greatsword		

GUL'OTHRAN MARAUDER TACTICS

A gul'othran marauder wants nothing more than to beat its enemies into submission. A marauder tends to focus its attacks on the most wounded foes, hoping to bloody a target so it can use *slave taker*. Once it has dominated a creature, it does everything it can to stay near that creature in order to maintain the saving throw penalty.

GUL'OTHRAN DRAGON RAIDER

DRAGON RAIDERS ARE SUPPORT ARTILLERY that specialize in making ranged attacks to supplement the attacks of gul'othran marauder ground troops. Unlike their Tu'narathi cousins, the dragon raiders of the gul'othran take red dragons from the world as mounts, eschewing those from the Astral Sea in favor of mounts that are more likely to have some familiarity with the realm being invaded. In this way, gul'othran dragon raiders are more than just weapons used in incursions into other planes; they are emissaries between red dragons and the githyanki, helping to bring the combat expertise of the red dragons to bear against the enemies of the githyanki. Most gul'othran dragon raiders train extensively in both tactics and mounted combat, allowing them to serve as field officers during an incursion.

Tu'narathi dragon rider

Gul'othran Dragon Raider		Level 17 Artillery
Medium natural humanoid, githyanki		XP 1,600
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +13	
HP 128; Bloodied 64		
AC 29; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 28		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
④ Silver Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+24 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage plus 1d8 psychic damage.		
⑦ Psychic Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+22 vs. Will; 3d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls against the gul'othran dragon raider and its mount until the end of the dragon raider's next turn.		
✱ Burst of Oppression (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Area burst 1 within 20; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is knocked prone.		
✱ Psychic Sunder (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Psychic		
Area burst 2 within 20; +20 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and whenever the target makes an attack, it takes 2d6 psychic damage (save ends).		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The gul'othran dragon raider or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Master Dragon Rider		
While mounted on a dragon, a gul'othran dragon raider can make either a <i>silver longsword</i> attack or a <i>psychic bolt</i> attack once per round as a minor action.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic	
Skills History +13, Insight +18		
Str 14 (+10)	Dex 24 (+15)	Wis 21 (+13)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 10 (+8)	Cha 16 (+11)
Equipment leather armor, silver longsword		

GUL'OTHRAN DRAGON RAIDER TACTICS

A gul'othran dragon raider specializes in firing psychic attacks from a distance and tends to use its *psychic bolt* as a minor action while mounted (thanks to its *master dragon rider* ability), saving the standard action for the dragon's more powerful attacks. If its allies are facing trouble from the opposition, a gul'othran dragon raider uses *psychic sunder* to

discourage its enemies from attacking, giving the other gul'othran dragon raiders a chance to recover and renew their attacks.

TU'NARATHI DRAGON RIDER

DEPLOYED IN THE DEFENSE OF THEIR HOME CITY, Tu'narathi dragon riders use red dragons from the Astral Sea as mounts. Accustomed to fighting in the

Tu'narathi Dragon Rider		Level 16 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid, githyanki		XP 1,400
Initiative +17	Senses Perception +12	
HP 156; Bloodied 78		
AC 32; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 27		
Saving Throws +2 against charm effects		
Speed 6		
⚔ Silver Longsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon		
+23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage plus 1d6 psychic damage, or 2d6 psychic damage if the target is weakened.		
⚡ Force Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Force		
Ranged 10; +21 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 force damage.		
† Dragon Rider's Challenge (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+23 vs. AC; 3d8 + 3 damage, and the target is marked by either the Tu'narathi dragon rider or its mount (rider's choice) until the end of the dragon rider's next turn.		
† Weakening Retribution (immediate interrupt, when a target marked by the Tu'narathi dragon rider or its mount makes an attack that doesn't include the creature marking it; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+23 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the target is weakened until the end of the Tu'narathi dragon rider's next turn.		
Master Dragon Rider		
While mounted on a dragon, a Tu'narathi dragon rider can make either a <i>silver longsword</i> attack or a <i>force bolt</i> attack once per round as a minor action.		
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)		
The Tu'narathi dragon rider or an ally within 10 squares of it can fly 5 squares.		
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic	
Skills Arcana +13, Nature +17		
Str 16 (+11)	Dex 24 (+15)	Wis 18 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 11 (+8)	Cha 13 (+9)
Equipment leather armor, silver longsword		

close quarters of the urban areas of Tu'narath, these dragon-riding githyanki are experts at rooting out targets. The mental bond a dragon rider has with its red dragon mount allows it to sense danger to itself or its mount, allowing it to spur the dragon into action accordingly. Most Tu'narathi dragon riders forge pacts with the dragons they ride; these pacts are made deep in the carved-out caves that serve as the dragons' lairs, and many a potential dragon rider has failed to return from an excursion to secure such a pact.

TU'NARATHI DRAGON RIDER TACTICS

When mounted on a dragon, a Tu'narathi dragon rider uses *silver longsword* as a minor action, allowing the dragon to move and then make its more powerful bite or double claw attacks. A Tu'narathi dragon rider tries to use the marking ability of *dragon rider's challenge* to split the damage taken evenly between its dragon and itself whenever possible.

OSYRIMON

OSYRIMON, ONE OF THE LICH-QUEEN'S most devoted subordinates, is the captain-general of the githyanki forces at Tu'narath and is in charge of the defense of the city. A veteran of many battles with the mind flayers, Osyrimon was once a member of the gul'othran. Following a number of successful incursions and victories in battles against aberrations on the Astral Sea, Vlaakith recalled Osyrimon to Tu'narath to help

Osyrimon



secure the city against insurgent githyanki. More at home commanding military forces in the field than rooting out rebellious members of his own race, Osyrimon has accepted the honor bestowed upon him and vowed to rid Tu'narath of any githyanki unwilling to accept the natural order of Vlaakith's leadership. However, years spent fighting rebels have brought him in contact with many who have attempted to persuade Osyrimon to switch sides, including the leader of a rebellious faction calling themselves the Sha'sal Khou (see "Tu'narath, City of Death" in *Dragon* #377). Though his loyalty remains steadfast, it might be only a matter of time before even Osyrimon begins to question the lich-queen's madness.

Osyrimon	Level 16 Elite Brute
Medium natural humanoid, githyanki	XP 2,800
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +13
HP 378; Bloodied 189	
AC 28; Fortitude 29, Reflex 27, Will 27	
Saving Throws +2 (+4 against charm effects)	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⚔ Silver Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
+19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage plus 1d10 psychic damage.	
⚔ Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
Osyrimon makes two silver bastard sword attacks, each against a different target.	
⚔ Deceptive Quickness (immediate interrupt; when an enemy makes a melee attack roll against Osyrimon; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Targets the triggering enemy; +20 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to the attack roll.	
⚔ Sling Foe (standard; recharge ☐ ☐ ☐) ♦ Force	
+17 vs. Fortitude; 2d12 + 5 force damage, and the target is pushed 5 squares and knocked prone. If the target ends this movement adjacent to one of its allies, that ally takes 1d10 damage and is knocked prone. Only one of the target's allies can suffer this effect when this power is used.	
⚔ For the Lich-Queen (free, when first bloodied; encounter)	
Osyrimon makes two silver bastard sword attacks, each against a different target.	
Master Dragon Rider	
While mounted on a dragon, Osyrimon can make a silver bastard sword attack once per round as a minor action.	
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter)	
Osyrimon or an ally within 10 squares of him can fly 5 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic
Skills Intimidate +16	
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 20 (+13) Wis 20 (+13)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 14 (+10) Cha 16 (+11)
Equipment plate armor, silver bastard sword	

OSYRIMON'S TACTICS

Osyrimon is a warrior who knows only life on the battlefield, and he is not suited to the intrigue and subterfuge found throughout Tu'narath. In combat, Osyrimon fights with single-minded conviction, using *double attack* while pursuing a wounded foe across the battlefield. If he finds himself surrounded, Osyrimon uses *sling foe* to hurl an enemy away, then moves into a position to continue attacking that same enemy, now without as many of its allies around.

VLAAKITH

VLAAKITH CLVII, THE LEADER OF THE GITHYANKI, is far more than the simple occupant of the githyanki throne. Long ago, Vlaakith performed a ritual to transform herself into a lich, giving her an extended life span and making her the longest-reigning Vlaakith in the githyanki's history. The lich-queen of the githyanki is a being of supreme power, who has secured her throne not only through undeath, but also by eliminating any rivals before they get too powerful.

More ominous than her immense power as a lich and a ruling tyrant is the fact that Vlaakith is in pursuit of divine apotheosis. Vlaakith hopes to channel the energy of the dead god upon which Tu'narath is built in order to become a god herself. In recent years, she has taken steps to transition the githyanki into a society that will accept her as their deity; she has already put a priest caste in place (the ghustil), and she has her loyal duthka'gith servants spreading throughout Tu'narath and the Astral Sea in preparation for the quelling of any rebellion that might spring up. Because of the madness that she has fallen into after centuries of undeath, Vlaakith believes that, through her own willpower and the strength of new githyanki castes she has created, the githyanki will come to worship her as other races do their own gods.

Unfortunately for her, Vlaakith has underestimated both the resourcefulness and the conviction of her enemies. Already, many rebellious githyanki have made attempts to bring down the lich-queen, though so far all have been unsuccessful. To prevent such dissent from spreading, Vlaakith created a caste of loyal inquisitors who call themselves the Ch'r'ai, and has ordered them to seek out and destroy any that would oppose her. Vlaakith has become even more of a tyrant as her apotheosis approaches, and many githyanki fear that she will destroy or enslave their race before her plan runs its course.

VLAAKITH'S TACTICS

Vlaakith is a dangerous lich who likes to attack her enemies head-on. She uses *banish* to dismiss any dangerous enemies that can limit her actions (such as defenders). She then either uses *crippling ray* to reduce the defenses of her enemies, or, if her enemies are all close to her, she unleashes *grasp of the lich-queen* to turn one of her enemies into a weapon. Each round, she uses *dancing silver greatsword* to attack an enemy and, when bloodied, spends a second minor action on *necrotic waves*.

Vlaakith		Level 21 Solo Controller	
Medium natural humanoid (undead)		XP 16,000	
Initiative +10		Senses Perception +14; darkvision	
Necromantic Aura (Necrotic) aura 5; each enemy that enters the aura or starts its turn there takes 10 necrotic damage.			
HP 788; Bloodied 394			
Regeneration 10			
AC 35; Fortitude 31, Reflex 34, Will 32			
Saving Throws +5 (+7 against charm effects)			
Immune disease, poison; Resist 15 necrotic Vulnerable radiant (if Vlaakith takes radiant damage, her regeneration doesn't function on her next turn)			
Speed 7			
Action Points 2			
⚔ Silver Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon +26 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage plus 1d10 psychic damage.			
⚔ Grasp of the Lich-Queen (minor; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Charm, Implement, Psychic +25 vs. Reflex; 2d12 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is dominated (save ends). While the target is dominated, any enemy of Vlaakith that starts its turn within 2 squares of the target takes 15 psychic damage.			
☹ Crippling Ray (standard; at-will) ♦ Implement, Necrotic Ranged 10; +25 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 4 necrotic damage. In addition, until the end of Vlaakith's next turn, the target is slowed and takes a -4 penalty to all defenses.			
✖ Banish (immediate reaction; when an enemy hits Vlaakith with a melee attack; at-will) ♦ Implement, Necrotic Targets the triggering enemy; +25 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 8 necrotic damage, and the target is banished to a remote region of Tytherion. While banished, the target takes no actions. At the end of its next turn, the target returns to the same square it occupied (or the nearest empty square).			
☹ Crippling Barrage (standard; at-will) Vlaakith makes three <i>crippling ray</i> attacks, each against a different target.			
⚔ Dancing Silver Greatsword (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon Close burst 10; targets one enemy; +26 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends).			
⚔ Necrotic Waves (minor 1/round; usable only while bloodied; at-will) ♦ Implement, Necrotic Close burst 2; +23 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 3 necrotic damage. In addition, Vlaakith gains a +2 bonus to her next attack roll before the end of her turn.			
Indestructible When Vlaakith drops to 0 hit points, her body and possessions crumble into dust, but she is not destroyed. She and her possessions reappear adjacent to her phylactery in 1d10 days, unless the phylactery is also destroyed.			
Telekinetic Leap (move; encounter) Vlaakith or an ally within 10 squares of her can fly 5 squares.			
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Deep Speech, Draconic Skills Arcana +23, Bluff +21, Insight +19, Intimidate +21, Religion +23			
Str 14 (+12)		Dex 11 (+10)	
Con 21 (+15)		Int 26 (+18)	
		Wis 19 (+14)	
		Cha 23 (+16)	
Equipment silver greatsword, scepter (rod)			

GRUUMSH

GRUUMSH DOES NOT CONCERN HIMSELF with puny heroes of the world. He is too busy crushing threats more worthy of his power. Instead he sends his powerful battlesworn exalted and exarchs to crush such niggling threats.

BATTLESWORN OF GRUUMSH

ONLY BLOOD-SOAKED SOULS steeped in destruction may join Gruumsh's eternal war in Chernoggar. Gruumsh culls his battlesworn from the greatest villains of the cosmos. What they lack in strategy, they more than make up for with aggression.

BATTLESWORN ORC LEGIONNAIRE

These terrible orcs didn't fear death when they had only one life. Now that Gruumsh has blessed them as battlesworn, they fight and die and rise again.

Battlesworn Orc Legionnaire		Level 23 Minion Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 1,275
Initiative +19	Senses Perception +15	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 39; Fortitude 36, Reflex 35, Will 33		
Speed 6 (8 while charging)		
⚔ Greataxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+30 vs. AC; 13 damage.		
➤ Handaxe (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 5/10; +30 vs. AC; 13 damage.		
Mocking Fury (immediate interrupt, when an enemy misses the battlesworn orc legionnaire with an attack; encounter)		
The battlesworn orc legionnaire makes a basic attack or a charge attack against the triggering enemy.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Giant
Str 27 (+19)	Dex 23 (+17)	Wis 19 (+15)
Con 25 (+18)	Int 10 (+11)	Cha 12 (+12)
Equipment chainmail, greataxe, 4 handaxes		

BATTLESWORN ORC LEGIONNAIRE TACTICS

A battlesworn orc legionnaire rushes into melee at the first opportunity. When given the chance to use *mocking fury*, a battlesworn will either charge a foe or hack at an easy target.

BATTLESWORN OGRE MAULER

THE MOST FEARSOME OGRE WARRIORS in the world die and become battlesworn of Gruumsh. These heavy hitters form the backbone of many armies in Chernoggar, thundering toward enemies to crush them or break their lines.

Battlesworn Ogre Mauler		Level 24 Brute
Large immortal humanoid		XP 6,050
Initiative +17	Senses Perception +15	
HP 275; Bloodied 137		
AC 36; Fortitude 36, Reflex 34, Will 32		
Speed 8		
⚔ Maul (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +27 vs. AC; 4d8 + 8 damage.		
⚔ Javelin (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 10/20; +25 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage.		
⚔ Brutal Hammer (minor; recharge [1]) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +27 vs. AC; 2d8 + 8 damage, and the target is stunned until the end of its next turn. <i>Afterspell</i> : The target is dazed (save ends).		
⚔ Roar of Destruction (free, when the battlesworn ogre mauler hits with a melee attack; encounter) ♦ Thunder		
Close blast 5; +23 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 8 thunder damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 3 squares.		
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Giant
Str 28 (+21)	Dex 21 (+17)	Wis 16 (+15)
Con 25 (+19)	Int 6 (+10)	Cha 8 (+11)
Equipment maul, 6 javelins		

BATTLESWORN OGRE MAULER TACTICS

A battlesworn ogre mauler begins combat by charging a foe to attack with its *maul* and then uses *brutal hammer*. Thereafter, it makes *maul* attacks against its nearest foe, using *brutal hammer* whenever it can, often to stun a foe before charging another.

BATTLESWORN ORC BLOODSAGE

A FEW ORCS LEARN TO DESTROY WITH MAGIC instead of the axe. A small number of them join Gruumsh as exalted, who has uses for lightning-spewing magicians.

Battlesworn Orc Bloodsage		Level 26 Minion Artillery
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 2,250
Initiative +21	Senses Perception +22	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		
AC 38; Fortitude 37, Reflex 38, Will 39		
Speed 6 (8 while charging)		
⚔ Longspear (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Reach 2; +33 vs. AC; 14 damage.		
⚡ Blood Bolt (standard; at-will) ♦ Lightning, Necrotic		
Ranged 20; +31 vs. Reflex; 14 lightning damage, and any enemy adjacent to the target takes 7 necrotic damage, or 14 necrotic damage if the target is bloodied.		
⚡ Blood Energy Burst (when the battlesworn orc bloodsage drops to 0 hit points) ♦ Lightning, Necrotic		
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +29 vs. Reflex; 14 lightning and necrotic damage. <i>Effect:</i> Each ally within the burst can make a melee basic attack as a free action.		
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Common, Giant	
Str 23 (+19)	Dex 26 (+21)	Wis 29 (+22)
Con 24 (+20)	Int 10 (+13)	Cha 17 (+16)
Equipment hide armor, longspear		



Battlesworn war troll defender

Battlesworn orc bloodsage

BATTLESWORN ORC BLOODSAGE TACTICS

A battlesworn orc bloodsage avoids melee and attempts to stand away from other minions to avoid area attacks. Knowing that its death can turn the tide of a battle, a bloodsage will try to stay within 3 squares of its allies and at least one enemy, however, so it can use *blood energy burst*.

BATTLESWORN WAR TROLL DEFENDER

MANY WAR TROLLS PAY HOMAGE TO GRUUMSH. Just one of these cunning and indefatigable fighters can form a bulwark on the battlefield for the rest of the army to gather around.

BATTLESWORN WAR TROLL DEFENDER TACTICS

A battlesworn war troll defender moves to include as many foes as possible in its reach and then uses its *flail attack*. It then takes advantage of anyone marking it by dealing extra damage with *vicious tactics*. The first foe that tries to shift while within its reach becomes the target of *not so fast*.

BATTLESWORN OF GRUUMSH LORE

Religion DC 16: The battlesworn of Gruumsh are immortal warriors plucked from the Shadowfell to serve Gruumsh in the afterlife as they did when they were mortals. Their lust for violence is constantly rewarded with endless bloodshed.

Battlesworn War Troll Defender Level 26 Soldier

Large immortal humanoid

XP 9,000

Initiative +21

Senses Perception +24

HP 242; Bloodied 121

Regeneration 20

AC 42; Fortitude 40, Reflex 36, Will 36

Vulnerable acid or fire (if the battlesworn war troll defender takes acid or fire damage, its regeneration doesn't function until the end of its next turn)

Speed 8

⚔ Flail (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

Reach 2; +29 vs. AC; 3d10 + 10 damage, and the battlesworn war troll defender slides the target 1 square.

⚔ **Not So Fast** (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within reach shifts away from the battlesworn war troll defender) ♦ Weapon

Reach 2; +27 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 10 damage, and the target is knocked prone and immobilized until the end of its next turn.

Threatening Reach

A battlesworn war troll defender can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).

Troll Healing ♦ Healing

If a battlesworn war troll defender is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that doesn't deal acid or fire damage, it falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of its next turn, when it regains 35 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to the defender while it's at 0 hit points, it is destroyed.

Vicious Tactics

A battlesworn war troll defender deals 2d10 extra damage against targets that are marking it.

Alignment Chaotic evil

Languages Common, Giant

Skills Athletics +28, Endurance + 26

Str 30 (+23)

Dex 22 (+19)

Wis 22 (+19)

Con 26 (+21)

Int 12 (+14)

Cha 14 (+15)

Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, flail

Religion DC 24: The battlesworn of Gruumsh constantly engage in an everlasting war with the followers of Bane in the astral realm of Chernoggar. If they die in battle there, they are revived to fight again on the following dawn.

Religion DC 29: The battlesworn of Gruumsh come in an endless variety due to the varied souls conscripted for battle in Chernoggar. Even so, some patterns emerge because of the kinds of souls Gruumsh favors. Most are, like Gruumsh, concerned simply with destruction, not with complex strategies or long-term planning.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Gruumsh's battlesworn gather in small squads and huge hordes throughout Chernoggar and the Shrapnels—the shards of land trailing the dominion, dating back to the time when Gruumsh crashed his home into Bane's abode. There they can be found in the company of angels of Gruumsh and powerful mortals who serve Gruumsh's ends. Gruumsh even allows some to break the boundaries of the planes to bring ruin elsewhere in the cosmos.

Level 24 Encounter (XP 32,400)

- ◆ 1 fomorian painbringer (level 19 elite controller, *MM* 110)
- ◆ 1 fomorian blinder (level 20 elite artillery, *Monster Manual* 2 114)
- ◆ 1 fomorian butcher (level 22 elite brute, *Monster Manual* 2 115)
- ◆ 6 battlesworn orc brawlers (level 23 minion soldier)
- ◆ 1 battlesworn ogre mauler (level 24 brute)

Level 25 Encounter (XP 40,550)

- ◆ 1 battlesworn ogre mauler (level 24 brute)
- ◆ 6 battlesworn orc bloodsages (level 26 minion artillery)
- ◆ 1 deva fallen star (level 26 artillery, *Monster Manual* 2 114)
- ◆ 1 elder iron dragon (level 19 solo lurker, *Monster Manual* 2 84)

EXARCHS OF GRUUMSH

GRUUMSH DEMANDS LITTLE OF HIS EXARCHS; his only tenets are to bring destruction, slaughter the weak, kill the opposition, and tear down what others build. The devastation needs no purpose, but it pleases Gruumsh to hear severed limbs flop to the ground, and few things are as amusing to him as the lamentations of other gods' followers cut short by sliced necks. Gruumsh's exarchs thus focus on bringing low the followers of other gods and those who worship none.

A powerful priest of Gruumsh might call up an exarch of Gruumsh by performing an act of great destruction, gaining an ally to wreak still more ruin upon the world, but Gruumsh's exarchs typically engage in their own devastating pursuits. When not leading a horde into the endless battle on Chernoggar, an exarch of Gruumsh might be breaking bodies in the Elemental Chaos, crashing across the Astral Sea to assault another domain, or intimidating mortals in the world or on another plane into taking destructive action.

Gruumsh's exarchs never sit back. They are active exarchs, hurling themselves into danger without hesitation. Success in such frenetic attacks is never guaranteed, so Gruumsh often elevates new exarchs to replace the fallen.

BAHGTRU, FIST OF GRUUMSH

Bahgtru's size and strength are legendary, but so too is his stupidity. Brute force brought him to prominence in his mortal life as an orc, when he pulped the smarter brains of many foes beneath his fists. Gruumsh saw Bahgtru as the natural champion of unreasoning destruction and made him an exarch, a move that even the dim-witted Bahgtru anticipated after he removed the previous exarch's head from his neck.

BAHGTRU'S TACTICS

At the start of combat, Bahgtru moves toward the nearest foe and uses *hammer fist*. In the following round, Bahgtru knocks the target back into other enemies with *backfist bowl away*. He then moves in among the dazed foes and spends his action point to use *double attack* on a dazed target or two. Bahgtru keeps as many dazed targets within his reach as possible, particularly those who would use ranged attacks, so that they end up provoking opportunity attacks from him one way or another. Bahgtru then alternates between *hammer fist* or *backfist bowl away* and *double attack*, dazing and pummeling enemies with his bare hands.

Bahgtru		Level 23 Elite Brute	
Large immortal humanoid, orc		XP 10,200	
Initiative +16		Senses Perception +10	
HP 528; Bloodied 264			
AC 35; Fortitude 39, Reflex 34, Will 33			
Saving Throws +2			
Speed 8 (10 while charging)			
Action Points 1			
⊕ Punch (standard; at-will)			
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 3d8 + 11 damage.			
⬇ Double Attack (standard; at-will)			
Bahgtru makes two punch attacks against dazed or stunned targets.			
⬇ Hammer Fist (standard; at-will)			
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 2d10 + 11 damage, and the target is dazed until the end of Bahgtru's next turn.			
⬇ Backfist Bowl Away (standard; recharge ⓧ ⓧ)			
Reach 2; +26 vs. AC; 2d8 + 11 damage, and the target is pushed 10 squares, knocked prone, and dazed until the end of Bahgtru's next turn. If the target ends this movement adjacent to any of Bahgtru's enemies, Bahgtru makes a secondary attack.			
<i>Secondary Attack:</i> Targets enemies adjacent to the target; +24 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 11 damage, and the secondary target is dazed until the end of Bahgtru's next turn.			
Threatening Reach			
Bahgtru can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (2 squares).			
Warrior's Surge (standard, usable only while bloodied; encounter)			
♦ Healing			
Bahgtru makes a melee basic attack. On a hit, he regains 132 hit points.			
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Giant	
Skills Athletics +27, Intimidate +20			
Str 33 (+22)		Dex 21 (+16)	
Con 24 (+18)		Int 6 (+9)	
		Wis 9 (+10)	
		Cha 19 (+15)	
Equipment hide armor			

BAHGTRU LORE

Religion DC 16: Bahgtru is an enormous orc who serves Gruumsh as an exarch. Ogres and other brutes pay homage to his raw power.

Religion DC 24: Dubbed the “Fist of Gruumsh” for his bare-knuckle battle style, Bahgtru is renowned for his strength and stupidity. Those who act in his name hope to draw upon his power to break through clever tricks and staunch defenses by using brute force.

Religion DC 29: Left to his own devices, Bahgtru rages across Chernoggar or whatever location he is in. Followers collect in his wake like scavengers behind a shark, seeking to take advantage of the ruin he wreaks. Bahgtru pays little heed to planning or even goals, so some seek to manipulate his simple-mindedness to their ends. Most do so at their peril, but Bahgtru obeys Gruumsh without question and often takes orders from other exarchs or Gruumsh's angels.



Bahgtru

LUTHIC, THE BLOOD MOON WITCH

Greatly feared even among Gruumsh's other followers, Luthic is a female orc exarch of the god of destruction. She is known for her cunning and pure viciousness.

Luthic	Level 27 Elite Controller (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid, orc	XP 22,000
Initiative +20	Senses Perception +28
Blood Call aura 2; each bloodied enemy gains vulnerable 10 to all damage while within the aura.	
HP 502; Bloodied 251	
AC 41; Fortitude 39, Reflex 38, Will 41	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover)	
Action Points 1	
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will)	
+32 vs. AC; 3d8 + 3 damage	
† Stretching Claws (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; targets one, two, or three creatures: +30 vs. AC; 3d8 + 3 damage.	
⚡ Blood Storm (standard; encounter) ♦ Necrotic, Zone	
Close blast 5; +29 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 6 necrotic damage.	
<i>Effect:</i> The blast creates a zone of raining blood that lasts until the end of Luthic's next turn. The zone is difficult terrain and blocks line of sight for enemies. <i>Sustain Minor:</i> The zone persists.	
Bloodied Frenzy (free, when first bloodied; encounter)	
<i>Blood moon frenzy</i> recharges, and Luthic uses it.	
Blood Moon Frenzy (standard; recharge [1]) ♦ Charm	
Luthic and each bloodied ally within 6 squares of her make basic attacks as free actions and gain a +2 bonus to the attack roll. When one of these attacks hits a bloodied enemy, the target is dominated by Luthic until the end of her next turn.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	Languages Abyssal, Common, Giant, Supernal
Skills Arcana +23, Insight +28, Intimidate +24, Stealth +25	
Str 17 (+16)	Dex 24 (+20) Wis 31 (+23)
Con 27 (+21)	Int 20 (+18) Cha 22 (+19)

LUTHIC'S TACTICS

Luthic tries to remain behind a screen of allies, lashing out with *stretching claws*. When her allies become bloodied, she uses *blood storm* and moves into the zone, and then uses her action point to inflict *blood moon frenzy* upon her foes. She then sustains *blood storm*, striking from it with *stretching claws* to gain combat advantage and using *blood moon frenzy* again when she can.

LUTHIC LORE

Religion DC 17: Few pray to Luthic directly, but many are inspired by her in dreams. If Gruumsh's followers engage in a strategy more complex than direct confrontation, it's likely that Luthic is behind it and they dreamed of a red moon, awakening with the taste of blood in their mouths.

Religion DC 26: Savage priests of Gruumsh creep out beneath the blood moon to commit atrocities in Luthic's name, but during the rest of the year, speaking of her is taboo. It is thought that speaking

Luthic's name might draw her attention, which always brings disaster if she is not called upon in the appropriate way.

Religion DC 31: Worshipers of Gruumsh believe Luthic to be his exarch because she embodies Gruumsh's desire for havoc and confusion. Although destruction remains Gruumsh's ultimate aim, her divisive ploys and the antagonism she foments cause cracks in ordered creation that lead to ruin.

VAPRAK THE RAPACIOUS

Vaprak loves the taste of gore spiced by fear. He is far more cunning than he appears, being more than a simpleminded predator as some of Gruumsh's other exarchs are. Vaprak often makes forays into the world at the behest of Gruumsh's most powerful worshipers or for his own enjoyment. While there, he targets those most responsible for maintaining order, and wherever he goes, he leaves a trail of blood and panic.

Vaprak		Level 25 Elite Skirmisher	
Huge immortal humanoid, troll		XP 14,000	
Initiative +22		Senses Perception +24	
HP 466; Bloodied 233			
Regeneration 20			
AC 39; Fortitude 41, Reflex 38, Will 36			
Vulnerable acid or fire (if Vaprak takes acid or fire damage, his regeneration doesn't function until the end of his next turn)			
Saving Throws +2			
Speed 12			
Action Points 1			
⊕ Claw (standard; at-will)			
Reach 3; +30 vs. AC; 3d8 + 9 damage; see also <i>blood bite</i> .			
⊕ Blood Bite (minor, when Vaprak hits a bloodied enemy with a claw attack; at-will)			
Targets a bloodied enemy hit with a claw attack; 2d8 + 9 damage, and Vaprak shifts 3 squares.			
Intimidating Move (move; recharge ☒ ☐) ⊕ Fear			
Vaprak moves his speed and can enter enemies' spaces, both without provoking opportunity attacks. If Vaprak passes through an enemy's space, Vaprak makes an attack against that enemy: +28 vs. Will; the target is weakened until the end of Vaprak's next turn.			
Threatening Reach			
Vaprak can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within his reach (3 squares).			
Troll Healing ⊕ Healing			
If Vaprak is reduced to 0 hit points by an attack that doesn't deal acid or fire damage, he falls prone and remains at 0 hit points until the start of his next turn, when he regains 100 hit points. If an attack deals acid or fire damage to Vaprak while he's at 0 hit points, he is destroyed. See also <i>Vaprak's vengeance</i> .			
Vaprak's Vengeance			
If Vaprak is destroyed, his remains continue to strike at creatures. Until the end of the encounter, Vaprak makes a claw attack against any creature that enters Vaprak's space or starts its turn there.			
Alignment Chaotic evil		Languages Common, Giant	
Skills Athletics +27, Endurance + 24, Intimidate +22			
Str 30 (+22)	Dex 26 (+20)	Wis 24 (+19)	
Con 25 (+19)	Int 17 (+15)	Cha 21 (+17)	



Vaprak

VAPRAK'S TACTICS

Vaprak closes with foes and then moves through and among them using *intimidating move*, flashing a fearsome grin as he slides right past the waiting blades of foes. He then makes *claw attacks* against weakened foes, relying on his *threatening reach* to make opportunity attacks. Vaprak uses his reach and his movement to stay out of range of melee foes and continues to use *intimidating move* when he can. When a foe is bloodied, he focuses *intimidating move* and *claw attacks* on that target to more frequently gain the benefit of *blood bite*.

VAPRAK LORE

Religion DC 17: Vaprak is a fell troll exarch of Gruumsh. Trolls that worship Gruumsh consider Vaprak their patron and often build bloody shrines in his name.

Religion DC 26: Gruumsh's worshipers typically consider Vaprak the most accessible of his exarchs because he is less unreasonable or malicious than the others. They see Vaprak as having a malign cunning that can be used to one's advantage so long as the exarch is pleased by offerings of gory destruction and terror inspired in others.

Vaprak is called the Rapacious because of his hunger for gore, but he is also known as the King Eater. When he appears in the world or on one of its echo planes, he often seeks out the rulers most responsible for sustaining the light amid the darkness

of the world, devouring them in a display of destruction that sows terror among their followers.

Religion DC 31: Vaprak's severed claw is rumored to be a powerful artifact, but as a troll he has regenerated his missing hand. Many have claimed to own the claw, but the powers ascribed to the item change with the possessor. In truth, many such artifacts have existed, either as gifts of Vaprak's favor or as trophies claimed by foes. Each claw functions for a while, but eventually withers away, often when it is needed most.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

Gruumsh's exarchs typically travel in the company of other beings of great destruction. Battlesworn are never far from them in Chernoggar, and mortal adherents often follow in their wake. On rare occasions, the exarchs even engage in battle jointly, and Gruumsh's eye follows such combats closely.

Note that the encounters below are at the high end of difficulty for their level. This is so that they present a challenge worthy of an exarch's inclusion.

Level 23 Encounter (XP 30,000)

- ◆ 1 angel of retrieval (level 22 artillery, *Monster Manual* 2 8)
- ◆ 5 angel of valor legionnaires (level 21 minion, MM 16)
- ◆ Bahgtru (level 23 elite brute)
- ◆ 1 battlesworn ogre mauler (level 24 brute)
- ◆ 1 fell troll (level 20 elite brute, MM 255)

Level 25 Encounter (XP 43,800)

- ◆ 2 battlesworn war troll defenders (level 26 soldier)
- ◆ 6 battlesworn orc legionnaires (level 23 minion soldier)
- ◆ 1 oni thunderer (level 22 skirmisher, *Monster Manual* 2 171)
- ◆ Vaprak (level 25 elite skirmisher)

Level 26 Encounter (XP 52,800)

- ◆ 1 battlesworn ogre mauler (level 24 brute)
- ◆ 3 battlesworn orc bloodsages (level 26 minion artillery)
- ◆ 2 battlesworn war troll defenders (level 26 soldier)
- ◆ Luthic (level 27 elite controller)

Level 27 Encounter (XP 62,850)

- ◆ Bahgtru (level 23 elite brute)
- ◆ 4 battlesworn orc bloodsages (level 26 minion artillery)
- ◆ 6 battlesworn orc legionnaires (level 23 minion soldier)
- ◆ Luthic (level 27 elite controller)
- ◆ Vaprak (level 25 elite skirmisher)

QUOM

DISPOSSESSED BY THE DESTRUCTION of their astral realm during the Dawn War, the quom fanatically hunt down Lakal's infinitesimal remaining fragments. Some of these might appear inside magic items or even within the bodies of living beings. The quom cut down without qualm or hesitation those who stand in the way of their quest for these motes.

Quom are humanoids that have green, blue, or violet skin. Their great heroes, called durud, grow second faces on the backs of their skulls and are greatly revered by the quom and feared by their enemies.

QUOM FANATIC

THESE DEDICATED SOLDIERS fight to the death to retrieve pieces of their dead god.

Quom Fanatic		Level 15 Soldier
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 1,200
Initiative +16	Senses Perception +12	
HP 145; Bloodied 72		
AC 31; Fortitude 27, Reflex 29, Will 27		
Speed 6, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)		
⚔ Broadsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+22 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage.		
🏹 Crossbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 15/30; +20 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage.		
⚡ Mystic Mark (minor; recharge [1]) ♦ Weapon		
Close burst 3; targets enemies; the target is marked (save ends).		
In addition, the quom fanatic gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls against creatures it has marked until the end of its next turn.		
Implacable Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the quom fanatic scores a critical hit; encounter)		
The quom fanatic can make a basic attack, shift 1 square, or move its speed.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Supernal
Skills Bluff +15, Insight +17		
Str 20 (+12)	Dex 24 (+14)	Wis 21 (+12)
Con 17 (+10)	Int 17 (+10)	Cha 16 (+10)
Equipment scale armor, broadsword		

QUOM FANATIC TACTICS

Eager to prove its skill, and to one day become a durud, a quom fanatic thrusts itself into the fray, uses *mystic mark* on its enemies, and wreaks havoc. Quom fanatics typically work in pairs or trios, moving forward as a group 6 squares apart and carving a path of carnage through large groups of enemies.

QUOM ENFORCER

ALMOST EVERY QUOM SHIP has a few quom enforcers to deal with "troublemakers" who won't give up shards of Lakal, one way or another.

Quom Enforcer		Level 17 Brute
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 1,600
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +13	
HP 198; Bloodied 99		
AC 29 (31 with <i>mystic fury</i>); Fortitude 31, Reflex 28, Will 29 (31 with <i>mystic fury</i>)		
Speed 6, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)		
⚔ Maul (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+20 vs. AC; 4d6 + 6 damage.		
⚡ Enforcer's Smash (standard; recharges when first bloodied) ♦ Weapon		
+20 vs. AC; 4d6 + 6 damage, and the target is knocked prone and dazed (save ends).		
⚡ Mystic Fury (standard; requires maul; recharge ☞ ☞) ♦ Weapon		
The quom enforcer makes three <i>maul</i> attacks, each against a different target. If at least one of these attacks hits, the quom enforcer gains a +2 bonus to AC and Will until the end of its next turn.		
Implacable Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the quom enforcer scores a critical hit; encounter)		
The quom enforcer can make a basic attack, shift 1 square, or move its speed.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Supernal
Skills Bluff +17, Intimidate +17		
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 18 (+12)	Wis 21 (+13)
Con 18 (+12)	Int 18 (+12)	Cha 18 (+12)
Equipment scale armor, maul		

QUOM ENFORCER TACTICS

As a large and powerful warrior, a quom enforcer is a dealer of death and pain. It uses *enforcer's smash* to knock enemies down and rattle them, followed by *mystic fury* on its next turn.

QUOM HARPOONIST

QUOM HARPOONISTS ARE EXPERTS at using their deadly weapons to retrieve those who flee from them.

Quom Harpoonist		Level 19 Artillery
Medium immortal humanoid		XP 2,400
Initiative +16	Senses Perception +20	
HP 142; Bloodied 71		
AC 31; Fortitude 31, Reflex 32, Will 31		
Speed 6, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)		
⚔ Cutlass (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
+26 vs. AC; 2d6 + 7 damage.		
🏹 Javelin (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 10/20; +26 vs. AC; 3d6 + 7 damage.		
🎯 Harpooning Javelin (standard; requires javelin; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Weapon		
Ranged 10/20; +26 vs. AC; 4d6 + 8 damage, and the target is pulled 3 squares and immobilized (save ends). <i>Each Failed Saving Throw:</i> The quom harpoonist pulls the target 3 squares.		
Harpoonist's Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the quom harpoonist, or one that is immobilized by <i>harpooning javelin</i> , scores a critical hit; encounter)		
The quom harpoonist makes a basic attack, shifts 1 square, pulls a creature immobilized by <i>harpooning javelin</i> 3 squares, or moves its speed.		
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Supernal
Skills Bluff +18, Insight +20		
Str 19 (+13)	Dex 25 (+16)	Wis 22 (+15)
Con 22 (+15)	Int 19 (+13)	Cha 19 (+13)
Equipment scale armor, cutlass (short sword), 5 javelins		



(Left to right) quom enforcer, quom fanatic, and durud healer

QUOM HARPOONIST TACTICS

Standing behind a line of enforcers and fanatics, a quom harpoonist uses *harpooning javelin* as often as it can to immobilize enemies and pull them closer. Then it lets its allies do the rest.

QUOM DESPERATE

WHEN A QUOM'S YOUTH HAS PASSED and it knows its chance to be marked as a durud has faded, it bands with others of the same kind into a small, elite group who call themselves desperates.

Quom Desperate Level 21 Minion Skirmisher (Leader)

Medium immortal humanoid

XP 800

Initiative +18 **Senses Perception** +15

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 35; **Fortitude** 31, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 33

Speed 6, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)

⚔ **Inspiring Cut** (standard; requires broadsword; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**
+26 vs. AC; 11 damage, and one ally within 5 squares of the quom desperate rolls to recharge one of its powers.

⚡ **Cosmic Vengeance** (when the quom desperate drops to 0 hit points)
Close burst 3; any enemy in the burst grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Supernal

Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 23 (+16) **Wis** 20 (+15)

Con 20 (+15) **Int** 20 (+15) **Cha** 26 (+18)

Equipment scale armor, broadsword

QUOM DESPERATE TACTICS

A quom desperate fearlessly throws itself at its enemies for the advancement of the quom cause, using *cosmic vengeance* to this end as its dying action.

DURUD FRAGMENT MAGE

DURUD FRAGMENT MAGES DRAW THEIR POWER through their link to the race's comet-ships, which are a part of Lakal.

Durud Fragment Mage Level 20 Elite Controller

Medium immortal humanoid, quom

XP 5,600

Initiative +15 **Senses Perception** +19; all-around vision

HP 376; **Bloodied** 188

AC 33; **Fortitude** 30, **Reflex** 32, **Will** 31

Saving Throws +2

Speed 8, fly 6, teleport 3

Action Points 1

⚔ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**

+25 vs. AC; 2d4 + 8 damage.

⚡ **Fragment Spike** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Force, Implement**

Ranged 20; targets one or two creatures; +25 vs. Will; 3d8 + 8 force damage, and the target is knocked prone.

✳ **Vortex of Lakal** (standard; recharge ⏏ ⚡) ♦ **Force, Implement, Radiant, Zone**

Area burst 3 within 20; +24 vs. Fortitude; 2d10 + 7 radiant damage, and the target is pulled 2 squares toward the origin square of the burst and slowed (save ends). The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the durud fragment mage's next turn. Any creature that ends its turn within the zone takes 20 force damage.

Implacable Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the durud fragment mage scores a critical hit; encounter)

The durud fragment mage can make a basic attack, shift 1 square, or move its speed.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Supernal

Str 23 (+16) **Dex** 20 (+15) **Wis** 19 (+14)

Con 20 (+15) **Int** 26 (+18) **Cha** 24 (+17)

Equipment robe, dagger, orb

DURUD FRAGMENT MAGE TACTICS

Early in a battle, a durud fragment mage tries to target at least two enemies with *vortex of Lakal*, particularly if those foes are in difficult terrain or in other circumstances that will make it difficult to leave the zone while they are slowed. The mage's ranged and area attacks are so much better than its melee attack that it is usually willing to suffer one attack of opportunity if that is the only way to use its better attacks. The fragment mage then uses *fragment spike* until its *vortex of Lakal* recharges.

DURUD HEALER

A DURUD HEALER HEALS ITS ALLIES by inflicting pain upon its enemies or stealing their vitality.

Durud Healer	Level 21 Controller (Leader)
Medium immortal humanoid, quom	XP 3,200
Initiative +16 Senses Perception +20; all-around vision	
Lakal's Veil (Healing) aura 5; when an enemy within the aura gains temporary hit points, each of the durud healer's allies within the aura regains 10 hit points.	
HP 196; Bloodied 98	
AC 35; Fortitude 33, Reflex 33, Will 35	
Speed 6, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)	
⚔ Staff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+26 vs. AC; 3d6 + 8 damage.	
✈ Lakal's Wrath (standard; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Healing, Radiant	
Ranged 10; +25 vs. Fortitude; 3d6 + 7 radiant damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of the durud healer's next turn. The first ally of the durud healer to hit the target while it is granting combat advantage in this way regains 20 hit points.	
✂ Binding Burst (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant	
Area burst 1 within 10; targets enemies; 2d10 + 8 radiant damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the durud healer's next turn.	
Implacable Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the durud healer scores a critical hit; encounter)	
The durud healer can make a basic attack, shift 1 square, or move its speed.	
Surge Siphon (immediate interrupt; when an enemy within 3 squares of the durud healer uses or is the target of a healing power; at-will) ♦ Healing	
The durud healer shifts 3 squares. If it ends this movement adjacent to the triggering enemy, the healing power grants only half its normal hit points, and each of the durud healer's allies within 5 squares of it regains 10 hit points.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Supernal
Skills Heal +20, Insight +20	
Str 23 (+16)	Dex 23 (+16)
Con 20 (+15)	Int 20 (+15)
	Cha 26 (+18)
Equipment chainmail, staff	

DURUD HEALER TACTICS

A durud healer begins a battle by supporting its allies from a distance with *binding burst* and *Lakal's wrath*. It watches the battlefield carefully for the use of healing powers, using *surge siphon* to move up and redirect healing to its allies at every opportunity.



Durud fragment mage

DURUD SLAYER

AS THEIR NAME IMPLIES, durud slayers are expert killers, using their garrotes to deadly effect.

Durud Slayer	Level 23 Lurker
Medium immortal humanoid, quom	XP 5,100
Initiative +23 Senses Perception +22; all-around vision	
HP 165; Bloodied 82	
AC 37; Fortitude 35, Reflex 36, Will 34	
Speed 8, fly 3 (while within the Astral Sea)	
⚔ Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+28 vs. AC; 4d4 + 10 damage.	
✂ Radiant Garrote (standard; at-will) ♦ Radiant	
+26 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 8 radiant damage, and the target is grabbed. The durud slayer can have only one target grabbed at a time. <i>Sustain Minor</i> : The grabbed target takes 4d4 + 10 damage.	
Implacable Determination (free, when an enemy within 5 squares of the durud slayer scores a critical hit; encounter)	
The durud slayer can make a basic attack, shift 1 square, or move its speed.	
Retreating Step (immediate reaction, when an enemy grabbed by the durud slayer succeeds on its escape check) ♦ Teleportation	
The durud slayer teleports 8 squares.	
✂ Slayer's Step (move; recharge ⏏ ⏏) ♦ Teleportation	
The durud slayer and any creature it has grabbed teleport 8 squares. If the durud slayer has a creature grabbed, that creature must end its teleport adjacent to the slayer.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Supernal
Str 24 (+18)	Dex 27 (+19)
Con 21 (+16)	Int 21 (+16)
	Cha 22 (+17)
Equipment scale armor, dagger	

DURUD SLAYER TACTICS

A vicious exactor of its dead god's wrath, a durud slayer uses *radiant garrote* to grab a victim before moving away with *slayer's step* to isolate its foe from any allies. At that point, the durud slayer viciously stabs its victim with *dagger attacks* while maintaining the grab. If the enemy escapes, it uses *retreating step* to ready itself for a new victim.

QUOM LORE

Religion DC 13: The quom are a race of mortal humanoids that sail the Astral Sea in their great cometlike ships. Unlike other creatures of the astral, they are not immortal.

Religion DC 20: Once a race of peacemakers and healers, the quom abandoned their old morality when their realm was destroyed. Now they care only for their quest to reassemble the pieces of Lakal and to restore their god to her former glory. If they sense a piece of Lakal within a creature, no matter how tiny, they will slice that creature to ribbons to obtain the fragment.

Religion DC 25: The quom realm of Lakal was not just a homeland; she was also their deity. She died during the Dawn War when the final confrontation between Bahamut and a now-defunct primordial brought them crashing through Lakal's veil. For this reason, the quom attitude toward

worshippers of living gods ranges from embittered to contemptuous. When negotiating with quom, it's best to avoid appeals to faith.

ENCOUNTER GROUPS

The quom can be found throughout the Astral Sea. They have been trained from a young age to work together in combat, each lending his or her particular skill to ensure success in battle.

Level 17 Encounter (XP 8,000)

- ◆ 2 quom fanatics (level 15 soldier)
- ◆ 2 quom enforcers (level 17 brute)
- ◆ 1 quom harpoonist (level 19 artillery)

Level 19 Encounter (XP 13,600)

- ◆ 1 durud healer (level 21 controller)
- ◆ 1 quom enforcer (level 17 brute)
- ◆ 2 quom harpoonists (level 19 artillery)
- ◆ 5 quom desperates (level 21 minion skirmisher)

Level 21 Encounter (XP 17,100)

- ◆ 1 durud healer (level 21 controller)
- ◆ 1 durud fragment mage (level 20 elite controller)
- ◆ 1 durud slayer (level 23 lurker)
- ◆ 4 quom desperates (level 21 minion skirmisher)

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